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Fathering and Child Maltreatment: A Grounded Theory Study

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

by

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Abstract

FATHERING AND CHILD MALTREATMENT: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY

By Jennifer Ann Shadik, PhD, MSW

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

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Literature related to fathers and child physical abuse and neglect is lacking (Guterman & Lee, 2005; Lee, Bellamy, & Guterman, 2009). The purpose of this study was to better understand several pertinent aspects of fathering related to maltreatment. Three research questions were examined: 1. What are the attitudes, behaviors and contexts of fathers who have abused or neglected a child that relate to maltreatment? 2. What are the resources and capacities of these fathers which could be capitalized on? 3. How does goodness-of-fit or a poor fit between the father and child impact the parenting relationships of these fathers? Fifteen fathers in a parenting program for parents who are at high risk or who have abused or neglected a child participated in

the study. In order to answer these questions, a traditional grounded theory methodology was used. Data analysis consisted of thematic analysis and constant comparative analysis. Based on data collected, a substantive theory entitled Fathering in a Context of Challenge and Complexity was developed. Results suggest that these fathers experience many challenges, but also have important strengths. Becoming a father was an important turning point for many of the fathers in this study. Fathers' relationships with his children's mothers, the need for social support, and the theme of change were all relevant. Implications for practice, policy, and research are discussed.

Keywords: fathering, maltreatment, grounded theory

Chapter One: Overview

Social workers frequently encounter child abuse and neglect, regardless of their specific area of practice, thus it is important for them to be knowledgeable about the role both mothers and fathers may play in maltreatment. Child protective services workers often lack training and encouragement regarding engaging fathers in services (Bellamy, 2009). The lack of inclusion of fathers in child protection work ignores potential risks and assets of fathers (Brown, Callahan, Strega, Walmsley, & Dominelli, 2009).

Fathers involved in the child welfare system are often overlooked or viewed as absent, insignificant or dangerous (Bellamy, 2009). This limited view has the potential to minimize fathers and their potential contributions. Thus far, fathers involved in child maltreatment are an understudied population (Guterman & Lee, 2005; Risley-Curtiss & Heffernan, 2003; Strega, Brown, Callahan, Dominelli, & Walmsley, 2009). Therefore, the efficacy of interventions being utilized with fathers is questionable. This is problematic as fathers may not be receiving effective services, which they need. Furthermore, children are potentially at risk if their fathers are not receiving interventions which are knowledge specific, culturally relevant and appropriate for men. As researchers gain more knowledge about quality fathering and the specific needs and strengths of fathers, they will be better able to help children.

The strengths perspective (Saleebey, 1997, 2011) is an important element of social work practice. It states the importance of focusing on capacity and strength at the individual, family

and community level. When fathers are overlooked or only seen as risks to children, an essential element of social work practice is missing. Researchers and practitioners must accurately identify the strengths and supports of each father in order to build on existing capacity and develop workable solutions.

Introduction

Child maltreatment is a social problem that impacts individuals, families and society. For fiscal year 2007, the United States Department of Health and Human Services (2009) reported that over 3.5 million children were the subjects of CPS investigations for abuse or neglect. Much research has been done to determine what places families at higher risk for abuse. Several factors such as social isolation, parental depression, stressors and poverty are well established as risk factors (Edwards & Lutzker, 2008; Fantuzzo, Stevenson, Kabir, & Perry, 2007; Schaeffer, Alexander, Bethke & Kretz, 2005).

Researchers have also examined ways to make child abuse treatment more effective. However, definitive answers to the predictors and treatment of child abuse and neglect are still not well understood (Chen & Scannapieco, 2006). The literature suggests that many services provided to families with maltreatment histories are not based on evidence that these services work (Chaffin & Friedrich, 2004). Research has also suggested that treatment efforts need to become more focused and specific (Lum, 2003).

One area where the literature is lacking is in identifying which treatments work best for which populations. In order for parenting intervention to be most effective, it must target the specific areas of concern. It is important for researchers to address which treatment types or focus will be most beneficial for which subset of clients. The literature identifies the multitude of programs available for treating parents who have abused their child. A closer look at the

literature reveals that while speaking of "families" or "parents" generally only mothers are included in the study (Risley-Curtiss & Heffernan, 2003; Strega, Brown, Callahan, Dominelli, & Walmsley, 2009). Fathers are mostly absent from consideration.

History of Fathering

The roles and responsibilities of fathers have changed over time. What follows is a brief review of fathering in the United States (See Griswold, 1993 for a comprehensive review). During the colonial period, fathers were considered the primary parent; they had final authority in matters concerning the child because they “owned” the child and its mother. Fathers were considered the primary parent from a legal standpoint (Mintz, 2013). Children were considered the property of their fathers; prior to the 19th century, fathers were traditionally given custody in the case of divorce (Griswold, 1993). During the Industrialization period in the 19th century, parental roles were redefined. Fathers were considered the wage earner and provider. For the most part, mothers were home with their children and had primary responsibility for both the home and children. By 1847, most courts felt that mothers were most capable of caring for the children and custody was generally awarded to the mother (Demos, 1986). A shift in legal and cultural views regarding children and parenting was underway.

With second wave feminism, women fought for equality in the realms of work and family (Freeman, 2001). The proportion of women engaged in paid labor greatly increased (Sandberg & Hofferth, 2001). More women entered the workplace, yet the rate of male contribution within the home did not increase at nearly the same rate (Sandberg & Hofferth, 2001). Women increased their work in paid labor while still maintaining a majority of the responsibility for childcare and home.

Another significant change is the composition and structure of families. Historically, the typical family consisted of a mother, father, and multiple children. Over time, more children were born to non-traditional families. In 1940, 4% of children were born outside of marriage, while in 1999 the rate of births outside marriage was 33% (Ventura & Bachrach, 2000). The increase in nonmarital births, combined with increases in divorce rates, resulted in many children residing with only one parent, generally the mother. Families changed in multiple ways including greater numbers of women in the workplace, more children had parents who were divorced or never married and given these changes, fathering roles were less clear than in the past.

Successful Fathering

What is considered the role of fathers has changed; along with it is the view of successful fathering. In Colonial times, a successful father was one who had legal and financial control in the family, provided educational and moral guidance to his children, corrected and punished their misbehavior, but was not involved in the daily care of young children, such as feeding, bathing, or diapering (Mintz, 2013). Successful fathering appears to be defined by both social and historical factors. What constituted good fathering in the early 1900's is different than what most would consider good fathering today. The role of the father has evolved from wage earner to include more nurturing and a greater expectation for fathers to take part in caretaking activities. Much of the literature focuses on father deficits and inadequacies (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997). There are books and articles chronicling fathers who are absent or uninvolved, yet much less emphasis has been placed on the strengths of fathers and their contributions to their child's development. One area where this is particularly true is in the field of child maltreatment, where fathers have often been left out of the research.

History of Maltreatment in the United States

Within the last century and a half, significant changes have taken place regarding the recognition of child maltreatment and the way this is addressed. In the colonial period, children were considered the property of their fathers (Mason, 1994). As such, they did not have rights of their own and their parents had control of all aspects of their custody and control. During the progressive era, a shift occurred where advocates fought to give children rights and status of their own. Early social work professionals and others fought for public education, child labor reforms, and other social and legal modifications for children.

In 1874, the highly publicized case of Mary Ellen occurred (Costin, 1991). There is some question regarding the Mary Ellen story and how it occurred, but it is clear that children's rights to protection became an important focus following the case. Mary Ellen was a nine year old girl who experienced severe physical and emotional abuse by her caregivers, Mary and Francis Connolly. Mary Ellen had been in the care of Francis Connolly since the age of 18 months, when she and her previous husband took her from the Outdoor Poor for the Department of Charities. Neighbors noted that she was covered in cuts and bruises and had overheard beatings and emotional abuse. A neighbor shared her concerns with Etta Angell Wheeler, a mission worker/social worker, who became involved with this case.

At that time, there were no laws protecting children from such abuse. Additionally, no organizations existed concerning the prevention or treatment of child abuse. However, organizations to prevent mistreatment and abuse to animals did exist. Etta Wheeler sought assistance from numerous agencies, to no avail. Eventually, she acquired assistance from advocates associated with the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, who worked to protect the child. The foster mother, Mary Connolly, was investigated and found

guilty of assault and battery and received one year of hard labor in the penitentiary while the foster father was neither investigated nor punished (Costin, 1991). Mary Ellen was then placed in the Sheltering Arms institution. Some of the board members of the NYSPCA became involved in forming a similar society to protect children. The New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was formed in 1874 and focused on finding children who were mistreated, rescuing them and convicting the abusers (Costin, 1991). With the Child Savers movement it became clear that children had rights to be protected from harm at home and in the workplace.

Another important milestone in the history of maltreatment in the United States is Caffey's pediatric study. Caffey's (1946) study described six pediatric patients who exhibited bone fractures and subdural hematomas, without evidence of skeletal disease. Caffey made the initial link between pediatric injury and possible maltreatment. He argued that the presence of unexplained fractures in the long bones of a child should be further investigated for the presence of subdural hematoma. While the idea was shocking to most, eventually this study led to more attention paid to unexplained injuries of children.

In 1962, a pivotal article was published by Kempe, Silverman, Steele, Droegemueller and Silver. They identify the Battered Child Syndrome (BCS), which is described as "a clinical condition in young children who have received serious physical abuse, generally from a parent or foster parent" (p. 105). The authors recognized this syndrome as a cause of injury or death and believe that battered children were generally less than three years old, although they acknowledged that this syndrome could occur with older children. They argued that BCS is often unrecognized, and when diagnosed, doctors were often reluctant to instigate an investigation. The article pushed doctors to take a more active role when examining children

with bone fractures, subdural hematoma, failure to thrive, soft tissue swelling or skin bruising; use of x-rays to detect current and prior injuries was also recommended. The focus was clearly on the consequences to the child, rather than the process leading to the consequences.

In 1975, Gil made the argument that one must look beyond single causal dimensions. He stated the importance of also viewing maltreatment at the institutional and societal level. He identified three levels of manifestation of child abuse: abusive conditions and interactions between children and their caretakers, the institutional level, and the societal level. He focused on the importance of fighting poverty and injustice, which contribute to maltreatment. Gil expanded the conversation and understanding of maltreatment, suggesting a more complex view of child abuse and argued that its prevention must also occur at multiple levels. Prevention still remains an unachieved aspiration.

The evolution regarding the recognition and approach to treatment in the United States has shifted over time. Those working in the field approach maltreatment from the viewpoint that there is not one single causal factor. Researchers now approach child maltreatment as a complex phenomenon with multiple causal factors and consider personal, interpersonal and broader factors. This study sought to examine an under researched area of maltreatment, that which includes a specific focus on fathers and maltreatment.

Justification for Dissertation

In order to effectively prevent child abuse and neglect, it is important to have a strong understanding of the needs of parents. While there is certainly a need for universal primary prevention efforts to help individuals transition effectively into the role of parent (Dubowitz, 2002), there is also a need to develop effective, targeted secondary and tertiary prevention

strategies for parents at risk of abuse and/or neglect or those who have already maltreated a child. The prevention framework used by professionals in the child maltreatment field has three levels, “*primary* prevention programs, directed at the general population (universal) in an effort to prevent maltreatment before it occurs; *secondary* prevention programs, targeted to individuals or families in which maltreatment is more likely (high risk); and *tertiary* prevention programs, targeted toward families in which abuse has already occurred (indicated)” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).

The identification of subgroups of parents who abuse is an important direction for treatment intervention as different subgroups are likely to have discrete characteristics that may respond to services in different ways (Girvin, 2004). One important subgroup of individuals which is neglected in the research is fathers. Many research studies either do not include fathers, or exclude them from analysis due to their small numbers. Improving our understanding of fathers is important in order to provide relevant prevention and treatment services that engage and retain fathers. Inclusion of fathers in child welfare studies is important; it allows for understanding their needs and strengths, and for developing effective interventions (Risley-Curtiss & Heffernan, 2003). When fathers are provided with relevant services that meet their needs they are more likely to result in greater parenting knowledge and satisfaction in parenting (Burgess, n.d.) thereby increasing the likelihood of positive outcomes for parent and child.

In general, literature related to fathers and child physical abuse and neglect is lacking (Guterman & Lee, 2005; Lee, Bellamy & Guterman, 2009; Risley-Curtiss & Heffernan, 2003; Strega, Brown, Callahan, Dominelli, & Walmsley, 2009). Increasing knowledge of fathers related to child physical abuse and neglect is important in order to effectively target prevention and treatment efforts with this subgroup. Guterman and Lee (2005) emphasize the importance of

building models which focus on father's needs, their help seeking behaviors and strategies for working with fathers. Therefore, increasing our knowledge of fathers is an essential step in allowing researchers to develop appropriate prevention and intervention services.

Themes and Gaps in the Literature

Chapter two will describe research themes in much more detail, but a brief overview of relevant themes will be presented initially. These include depression, substance abuse, young age, race and ethnicity, father interaction and involvement, parenting style, beliefs about child development, empathy, physical discipline, co-parenting conflict, intimate partner violence (IPV), family structure, temperament and goodness of fit, poverty, incarceration, and child factors.

Depression in fathers has been identified as impacting healthy parenting practices (Cummings, Keller, & Davies, 2005). The literature is also beginning to suggest that when a father is depressed, it impacts the parental relationship (Cummings, Keller, & Davies, 2005) and child outcomes (Callender, Olson, Choe, & Sameroff, 2012). There is concern that current measures to diagnose depression may not accurately detect depression in men (Goodman, 2004). Thus, further study which uses instruments tested and/or designed for use with men is important.

Substance abuse studies have thus far focused primarily on mothers. However, extant research suggests that children of substance abusing fathers have higher levels of aggressivity (Moss, Mezzich, Yao, Gavalier, & Martin, 1995) and they are at greater risk for negative outcomes when they live with their substance abusing father (Osborne & Berger, 2009). Much more research is needed to understand the ways fathering is impacted by substance abuse and the implications for children of substance abusing fathers.

Age at the time of becoming a father is believed to be a factor in child maltreatment. Lee, Guterman, and Lee (2008) found that becoming a father at a younger age is linked with a greater likelihood for physical child abuse. Historically, teen mothers have been studied much more than teen fathers (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Paschal, Lewis-Moss, & Hsiao, 2011)

Researchers have begun to look at differences in racial and ethnic groups concerning parenting characteristics and risks for child maltreatment. Differences have been found in likelihood of fathers to spank children (Lee, Guterman, & Lee, 2008) and in likelihood to utilize psychologically aggressive parenting behaviors (Fagan, 2000). These are newer studies and further exploration is necessary.

Father interaction and involvement is an area where more research on fathers has been conducted (see for example, Allen & Daly, 2002; Parke, 2002). Many of the initial studies focused on whether or not fathers were involved with the children. Some studies then began including the number of hours of involvement, but did not consider quality of interaction between the father and children. Another concern is that the majority of studies of father involvement rely on mother report (Saracho & Spodek, 2008), without gaining father input.

Parenting style is a relevant theme for consideration when examining fathering and maltreatment. The research tends to look at authoritarian, permissive and authoritative styles; however, the research on which these styles were based was primarily conducted with middle income, highly educated white parents in the United States and may not be as relevant for parents of another race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status. There are differing reports in the literature concerning whether mothers and fathers tend to interact and care for their children in different ways. Some more recent research suggests that fathers encourage their children to take

more risks (Paquette, 2004; Brussoni & Olson, 2011), which may potentially provide unique opportunities and benefits for children.

A father's beliefs about child development are an important area to examine as lack of information or misinformation can result in inappropriate expectations. It is important for parents to understand typical child development and what can realistically be expected at various developmental stages. Inappropriate parenting knowledge and expectations are considered a risk factor for child maltreatment (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2008; Palusci, Crum, Bliss, & Bavolek, 2008; Tamis-Lemonda, Shannon, & Spellman, 2002).

Empathy is another relevant area for consideration. The literature describes various definitions of empathy, which may cloud the issue when comparing empirical data. Empathy is considered to be important for parents in order for them to understand their child's needs, comfort the child and understand the child's perspective (Psychogiou, Daley, Thompson, & Sonuga-Barke, 2008; Wiehe, 1997). Low levels of empathy are considered a risk factor for child maltreatment (Wiehe).

Another area warranting consideration for fathering and maltreatment is that of physical discipline. Research has found that more than 90% of parents in the United States use corporal punishment with their children (Straus, 2000). Lee, Perron, Taylor and Guterman (2011) found that significant psychosocial issues related to the father such as paternal stress, alcohol and drug use, and major depression were significantly correlated with higher use of corporal punishment by fathers. Some of the studies which examine fathering and physical discipline only look at biological fathers, which misses many who are in a fathering role such as step-fathers, adoptive fathers, and social fathers.

Co-parenting conflict has been identified as a barrier to fathering. Research has begun to identify a connection between the father and mother's relationship and the impact it has on parenting (Feinberg, 2002, 2003). Furthermore, the relationship between the parents has an impact on a father's role as an engaged father (Knox, Cowan, Pape Cowan, & Bildner, 2011). While this information is shedding light on co-parenting, there are limitations in the research which has been conducted thus far. Much of the research on co-parenting is focused on white, middle class, nuclear families (Feinberg, 2003).

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is another pertinent theme in the literature. Prior research indicates a link between intimate partner violence (IPV) and child maltreatment. Research has found rates of co-occurrence of IPV and maltreatment between 30 and 60% (Edleson, 1999). A study of father's perceptions of the impact of IPV on their children found that a minority believed their child was affected by fighting (Salisbury, Henning, & Holdford, 2009).

Family Structure is a construct which is often underexamined. The American family today frequently does not fit neatly into preset categories. There are many adults who have biological children with more than one partner, thus multipartnered fertility must be examined, as well as nonresidential biological fathers, and social fathers. It is important for researchers to look beyond traditional nuclear families in order to better understand the full range of fathers.

Temperament and goodness-of-fit are under researched areas with regard to parenting and fathering. Temperament refers to an understanding that each child comes into the world with a unique temperament or behavioral style consisting of nine categories (Chess & Thomas, 1996). Goodness of fit examines the construct of temperament from the perspective of the fit between the child and parent's respective temperaments. While a specific temperament is

neither good nor bad, a lack of fit between the parent and child's temperament can be problematic.

Poverty is a relevant theme in the parenting and maltreatment literatures. Living in poverty is considered a risk factor for abuse (Guterman & Lee, 2005; National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, 2011). Fathers living in poverty often experience significant barriers including racism, lack of jobs, unsafe neighborhoods, and living apart from their children. Children raised in poverty tend to experience greater risks from birth through the teenage years (Magnuson & Duncan, 2002) including lower birth weight, higher risk of emotional and behavioral problems, and higher incidence of child maltreatment. Less is known about poverty's impact on nonmarried fathers as much of the research considers poverty's impact on married fathers and single mothers, thus more attention is needed in this area.

Incarceration is relevant when examining fathers as 63% of federal prisoners are parents of children under age 18 (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010). Parents who are incarcerated clearly have fewer opportunities to interact with and parent their children. Once released, parents who were incarcerated often have difficulty securing a job. Thus, issues of stress and poverty are frequently applicable to this population.

In general, the fathering literature has given little attention to child factors such as age, gender, and disability. Some research exists but is generally focused on mothers or parents in general, without examining differences between mothers and fathers. Previous research has found girls to have a maltreatment rate greater than boys (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). Research has also found children under the age of three to be considered at higher risk for child maltreatment (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Children with various types of disabilities have a higher rate of maltreatment than their

nonsdisabled peers (Sullivan & Knutson, 2000). More research is needed concerning how these childhood factors are related to maltreatment for fathers.

Definition of Terms

In order to discuss a study concerning fathers and child abuse and neglect, it is first important to define the relevant terms. Each of these concepts has been used in different ways by different authors and researchers. The following definitions will be used throughout the study for the purpose of clarifying meaning at the outset.

The terms ‘father’ and ‘fatherhood’ are used differently in the literature by various authors. Some studies refer only to biological fathers, whereas others include step-fathers and social fathers. For the purposes of this study, fatherhood includes “the behavior and identity enacted by men who have children” (Pleck, 2007). Therefore, this research will include biological fathers, step-fathers, and social fathers who play a fathering role in the life of one or more children.

Different states define child maltreatment differently, but federal legislation identifies a minimum set of behaviors that define child abuse and neglect. According to The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), which was amended by the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003, a minimum definition of ‘child abuse and neglect’ is, “Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm” (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2008). This study will not include sexual abuse, thus will focus exclusively on physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.

Research Questions

1. What are the attitudes, behaviors and contexts of fathers who have abused or neglected a child that relate to maltreatment?
2. What are the resources and capacities of these fathers which could be capitalized on?
3. How does goodness-of-fit or a poor fit between the father and child impact the parenting relationships of these fathers?

Current Study

Dubowitz (2009) states the importance of directly interviewing fathers or father figures. In order to develop appropriate prevention programming, we must start with a solid understanding of these fathers from their own perspectives and in their own words. The literature suggests new studies should go beyond superficial demographics to acquire more in-depth knowledge of fathers (Guterman & Lee, 2005). A thorough understanding of fathers is an integral step towards acquiring increased insight into the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. This research focused on fathers who have maltreated a child in order to better understand their attitudes, behaviors, and contexts related to the incidence of maltreatment.

The study used a grounded theory design which consisted of conducting individual interviews with fathers or father figures to better understand their perspectives on fathering and the maltreatment incident(s) they perpetrated. The study was an emergent design where the question probes changed as the participants either corroborated the existing literature or added new dimensions. Some of the beginning dimensions, based on the literature available, included beliefs about child development, discipline and the impact of intimate partner violence. Probes were added concerning child's gender, social supports, ways child's mother has helped father in his parenting, and ways the father has helped child's mother with her parenting. Additionally,

improving understanding of how fathers' age, family structure, race and ethnicity, mental health, substance abuse, incarceration history, and co-parenting relationship impact fathering were important areas of inquiry. Lastly, improving understanding of how temperament and child factors impact fathering were examined. Grounded theory is useful when theory is needed to better explain a process or how people experience a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The grounded theory approach allows the researcher to generate a theory inductively from data gathered from interviews, in this case with fathers who have maltreated a child. Maximum variation sampling was used to select participants. It was estimated that 20-30 fathers/father figures would be interviewed and that interviewing would continue until saturation was reached. In the end, a total of 15 fathers were interviewed.

While gathering data from participants, the data was simultaneously analyzed and coded in order to develop a theory based on the data collected. This developed theory was derived from the interviews with fathers with the hope of allowing a more thorough and detailed understanding of what led to the abuse or neglect and ultimately consideration for ways it could have been prevented. The information from the developed theory will be used to develop further research which will be used at a later date (post-dissertation) to assess, on a larger scale, the intersection of fathers and child physical abuse and neglect.

Key Dimensions

There were four key dimensions for this research study, which were used to frame the interview. When employing a grounded theory design, one must stay open to what participants are saying, but in order to engage in ethical research practices, it is necessary to provide information about the study for potential participants and Institutional Review Boards. The four key dimensions included in this study were:

- Strengths of fathers. These include their prior experiences, education, and relationships which may impact their parenting and influence their resilience and relationships with their children.
- Challenges and needs of fathers. These include any mental health issues, substance abuse either currently or historically, if they were young fathers, or have experienced incarceration.
- Contexts of fathering. The primary areas for consideration included poverty, family structure, family size and relationship with child's mother.
- Attitudes and Behaviors of fathers. This included the beliefs a father has regarding children and parenting, their actions toward their children including playing, caretaking and physical discipline.

Gaining more knowledge of fathers and their strengths, challenges, contexts, attitudes and behaviors will hopefully benefit prevention efforts as well as programming aimed at those who have already maltreated a child. The knowledge gained from this study will allow a greater understanding of a specific subgroup that is of utmost importance to those planning maltreatment interventions. An implication of the study is the potential knowledge toward improving treatment interventions to prevent recidivism with fathers who have already maltreated a child.

While gathering data from participants, the analytic strategy utilized was constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This involved comparing information between and within cases in order to develop a theory based on the data collected, which then allows for further testing. This developed theory was grounded in the interviews with fathers in order to allow a more thorough and detailed understanding of what led to the abuse or neglect and consideration for ways it could have been prevented.

Theory

The goal of this research was to construct a theory related to fathering and maltreatment. Therefore, a specific theory was not used as the basis for the study. However, two theories were utilized to help understand and frame challenges related to fathering and maltreatment. These theories were the bioecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005) and the developmental ecological model (Belsky, 1993).

Sample

Maximum variation sampling was used to select participants along relevant dimensions. These included the father's relationship to the child (biological, adoptive, step-father, and social father), incarceration history, mental health history and substance abuse history. The plan was to conduct a case study where 20-30 fathers/father figures were interviewed, allowing for maximum variation among the dimensions previously stated. After recruiting in all active groups, contacting those who had completed group in the last year and informing fathers at intake of the study, a total of 15 fathers chose to participate. With the fathers who participated, a good amount of variability was achieved in terms of age at which the men had their first child, the numbers of children they have, and their income levels, along with other important variables.

Product

The goal was to create a substantive theory which was grounded in the language and experiences of the participants. This study sought to create a testable theory, which is prescriptive for working with fathers who have maltreated children. The substantive theory was developed based on the interviews and demographic data collected from participants.

Importance to Social Work

Within the population of parents who have physically abused or neglected a child or are considered at-risk, various subgroups exist. It is likely that these subgroups vary in the reasons and contexts in which maltreatment occurs. It is also likely that subgroups will respond differently to various prevention and treatment efforts. Freisthler, Bruce and Needell (2007) state the importance of designing services that are specific to the needs of children and their families. The current literature on fathers who have physically abused or neglected a child is scant. Therefore, gaining rich, detailed information is necessary.

Gaining more knowledge of fathers and their needs will also benefit programming aimed at those who have already maltreated a child. In many cases, treatment interventions are tested solely with mothers. Better understanding of the unique dimensions of fathers offers the opportunity to specialize services to meet their needs. Focusing on fathers is important from a social justice perspective. This population has been understudied, and services are provided to them without being tested. Social work practitioners need more information to ensure that the services they provide are appropriate and effective for fathers as well as mothers. The knowledge gained from this study will allow a greater understanding of a specific subgroup that is of utmost importance to those planning maltreatment interventions. This grounded theory study has the potential to enrich the way social workers in the field of child maltreatment conceptualize and intervene with fathers. An implication of the study is the potential knowledge toward improving treatment interventions to prevent recidivism with fathers who have already maltreated a child.

Parents who have abused or neglected a child are often thought of as a homogenous group. It is important that this belief is challenged and that the disparate strengths and needs

within this population are acknowledged and addressed. In order to better understand the subgroups that exist, it is essential that researchers conduct in-depth, in person interviews to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding. This research has the potential to increase efficacy for those planning prevention and treatment efforts. The best planned interventions will be of little use if they do not understand and meet the needs of families, so we must talk to parents. By conducting in-depth interviews with fathers, improving our understanding of their needs and strengths, knowledge of this subgroup is increased, as is the likelihood of developing effective, innovative strategies for the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

Dissertation Overview

The following research attempts to answer the research questions of 1. What are the attitudes, behaviors and contexts of fathers who have abused or neglected a child that relate to maltreatment? 2. What are the resources and capacities of these fathers which could be capitalized on? 3. How does goodness-of-fit or a poor fit between the father and child impact the parenting relationships of these fathers? Chapter one offers a brief overview of the history of fathering. The justifications for this research study, including existing gaps in the literature are discussed. Additionally, the key dimensions of the study, definitions of relevant terms, and the research questions are detailed. Finally, this chapter discusses the importance of this research to the field of social work.

Chapter two provides information regarding social justice issues related to fathering, as well as the importance of a strengths perspective. The literature review provided in chapter 2 presents background information on fathering in general as well as fathering and maltreatment.

Two theories are used to provide the framework for this project: the bioecological theory of human development and the developmental ecological model. This chapter reviews gaps in the literature and areas needing further exploration.

Chapter three focuses on the chosen methodology, traditional grounded theory. This chapter details the historical and theoretical underpinnings of the study and the reasons it was utilized. Further, this chapter examines the sample, data collection, data analysis, and rigor. Human subjects protection and efforts to protect confidentiality and privacy of participants are also discussed. Finally, this chapter discusses assessment of the quality of the study and its limitations.

Chapter four presents the results of the study. The grounded theory which emerged from data analysis, *Fathering in a Context of Challenge and Complexity*, is discussed. Analysis of the data resulted in four categories that are proposed to lead to a core category of acceptable fathering. This substantive theory helps us better understand the challenges and complexity involved in fathering for the fathers who participated in this study.

Chapter five includes the discussion and implications of the completed study. Key findings in each of the five categories are described. Additional findings of importance are discussed. This chapter also examines implications of this study for social work education, practice, and policy. Directions for future research, based on the findings of this study are suggested.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Research on fathers is undergoing a transition. Previous conceptions of fatherhood have focused on father's role as moral leader, educator, and breadwinner have shifted to include increased expectations for nurturing and child care (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000). There has been a transition in the literature, moving from a focus on father's deficits to his contributions to child development (see Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997). Research is beginning to recognize the important contributions fathers make to the social, emotional and academic development of their children (Parke, 2002). The term fatherhood is used in two different ways within the social sciences, "fatherhood as a *fertility status*, and fatherhood as the *behavior and identity* enacted by men who have children" (Pleck, 2007). The latter meaning will be used throughout this chapter.

In comparison to mothers, much less information exists regarding fathers as they are significantly underrepresented in parenting research (Cabrera et al., 2000; Phares, 1996). In recent years, the study of fathering has increased, yet there is not a comprehensive theory of fathering (Cabrera, Fitzgerald, Bradley, Roggman, 2007). The theories currently utilized to study fathers are often sexist, resulting in mother blaming (Phares, 1996). Concepts and theories from other areas have been adapted for use with fathering (Palkovitz, 2007), generally without testing their efficacy with this population.

Fathers are not a homogeneous group. There are within group and between group variations as well as individual differences (Gasden, Fagan, Ray, & Davis, 2004). Greater cultural variation exists in paternal roles than maternal roles (Paquette, 2004). As research has lagged behind the increase in variability in father roles, a thorough understanding of diversity in fathering does not yet exist. Specific subgroups of fathers are particularly neglected in the literature. This includes African American fathers (Dubowitz, Lane, Greif, Jensen, & Lamb, 2006), teen fathers (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Fagan & Lee, 2011; Paschal, Lewis-Moss, & Hsiao, 2011), Hispanic fathers (Cabrera, Shannon, Mitchell, & West, 2009), low-income fathers (Forste, Bartkowski, & Jackson, 2009; Nelson, 2004; Vogel, Boller, Faerber, Shannon, & Tamis-LeMonda;), nonmarried fathers (Edin, Tach, & Mincy, 2009; Magnuson & Duncan, 2002), social fathers (Berger & Langton, 2011; Gorvine, 2010) and fathers caring for children who are ill or have complex health needs (Chesler, & Parry, 2001; Hobson & Noyes, 2011; Sullivan-Bolyai, Rosenberg, & Bayard, 2006).

Father's behavior is often contrasted to mother's behavior. This stance assumes that mothers have the correct answers and that their behavior is the official standard to uphold (Day & Mackey, 1989). Research results are mixed when considering differences in the ways fathers and mothers parent, with some evidence suggesting that parenting differences depend on the context, specifically whether the parenting is occurring within a father-child dyad or a triad of mother-father-child (Lindsey & Caldera, 2006). Research concerning how fathers impact the development of their child is limited (Dubowitz, Lane, Ross, & Vaughan, 2004). The extent of the impact for children of differences in parenting is not fully understood, although the literature is beginning to suggest that fathers play an important role in children's development (Krishnakumar et al., 2011). By assuming that men and women parent in the same way,

resulting in the same outcomes, we are potentially ignoring positive differences in each of their respective styles and roles that may be important for children.

Particular aspects of father involvement in subtypes of fathers have differing outcomes for different children (Flouri, 2005), suggesting involvement is dependent upon the circumstance and context. This indicates the need to avoid broad generalizations in order to look more closely at specifics. In some cases, father involvement appears to have a differential impact, based on whether it is a single or dual-earner family, the child's gender, or the specific type of outcome. Father involvement does not automatically lead to enhanced wellbeing for children in all areas. Rather, the context of involvement must be considered.

Some research suggests that in dual-earner families, fathers tend to be less responsive and sensitive when interacting with their children (Grych & Clark, 1999), suggesting that the circumstances of a spouse may impact fathering behaviors. Flouri's (2005) analysis regarding fathering and child outcomes found that father involvement was sometimes related to certain positive outcomes for children, such as happiness and academic motivation, but not to other positive outcomes for children, such as labor force participation. According to Flouri, father involvement appears to provide a buffering effect at times, for certain children, in certain aspects of their lives. Her analysis further notes that father involvement may have different effects for sons and daughters. Father involvement was related to a lower risk for delinquency for sons, but not daughters (Flouri & Buchanan, 2002) and was protective against experiencing adult homelessness in adult sons from low socio-economic groups (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004).

It is likely that we do not yet fully understand how and in which ways fathers impact their children. There are multiple reasons for this lack of understanding including imprecise measurement, measures designed for mothers as opposed to fathers, and the reliance on mother-

report of father behaviors. Additionally, research has largely overlooked the importance of children's contributions to fathering (Hanington, Ramchandani, & Stein, 2010; Karraker & Coleman, 2005; Laursen & Collins, 2009). Coupled with these issues, researchers have mainly taken a narrow focus of father's contributions: absent or present, economically supportive or not (see Gasden, Fagan, Ray, & Davis, 2004). The view that a father is either economically supportive or does not contribute financially, is misleading and limited. Clearly, all children need financial assistance. Some fathers contribute financially on an intermittent basis or provide diapers or formula in lieu of money. While this approach may not provide all of the financial resources the child needs, it does indicate that gradations exist regarding financial support. Furthermore, by only examining financial contributions, other types of contributions such as emotional, recreational, and moral support are overlooked. Researchers are beginning to broaden the focus on fathers, which presents new opportunities to better understand fathers, their needs and strengths, as well as their impact on children (Marshall, English, & Stewart, 2001; Renk et al., 2011).

The presence or absence of fathers, combined with the quality of the relationship between a father and his child, are understandably important in the developmental trajectory of a child. Research has begun to take more interest in the ways fathers impact children's development; thus far, the primary focus has been on White, middle-class fathers (Dubowitz, Lane, Ross, & Vaughan, 2004). Less attention has been paid to fathers of other socioeconomic and racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Social Justice

The term social justice is defined in multiple ways, but generally refers to three types of social justice: legal justice, commutative justice, and distributive justice; the latter being

particularly relevant for social work. Beverly and McSweeney (1987) proposed the following definition of social justice:

Justice . . . means fairness in the relationships between people as these relate to the possession and/or acquisition of resources based on some kind of valid claim to a share of those resources . . . the justice or injustice of a particular policy or situation is determined by looking at the fairness of the distribution of resources in relation to the claims or demands made for those resources. (p. 5)

When considering fathering, when one analyzes whether fathers have received the same resources as mothers, the research suggests this has not occurred. In order to provide resources, one must first assess whether fathers have been adequately studied in order to design appropriate interventions. When a group of people is not fully understood, one must question the efficacy of interventions designed for said population. To increase social justice for fathers, we must first understand them, and then develop appropriate interventions which target their needs. It is essential to better understand fathers who parent in order to design programs that are knowledge specific, culturally relevant and appropriate for men. Those planning interventions cannot make grand assumptions; they must understand individual family needs and appropriately address them (Girvin, 2004; Lum, 2003). Developing our understanding of fathers means looking at various subgroups of fathers, such as nonresidential, low-income, teen fathers, and fathers of various racial and ethnic backgrounds. When we expand our vision of fathers to look beyond White, middle class fathers who are married or divorced, we should begin to understand the full range of fathers. Guterman and Lee (2005) suggest the need to expand our focus beyond demographics in order to increase our in-depth knowledge of fathers. Furthermore, once we have expanded our view on fathers, we must then get to know them by speaking directly to them

about their attitudes, strengths, challenges, and life situations which impact fathering. Dubowitz (2009) notes the importance of directly interviewing fathers or father figures in order to hear their perspectives.

Increasing knowledge of fathering is also essential for social justice related to children. The more we know about quality fathering, needs of fathers, and the contexts which both support and detract from it, the more we can help children. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2000) reports fathers commit 43.5% of physical abuse toward children in this country. Children are a population that is in many ways helpless and dependent on the adults in their life. When children's fathers are uninvolved, or the involvement of the father is compromised due to substance abuse or mental health issues, child well-being is negatively impacted (Christoffersen & Soothill, 2003; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; Kane & Garber, 2004; Olmstead, McWey & Henderson, 2011). Fathers' issues are known to impact mothering both directly and indirectly; when fathering knowledge and resources are limited, mothers and children suffer. Therefore, this is an issue for families. Children have little control of their caregivers and care; they are a vulnerable population. Increasing the knowledge base around fathering is likely to pay dividends for fathers, mothers and children.

Strengths Perspective of Fathering

The strengths perspective (Saleebey, 1997, 2011) is focused on hearing and acknowledging the strengths of clients and working with clients to utilize and enhance said strengths. A primary focus is on observing all signs of capacity, determination, and resolve of a client (Saleebey, 2011). Part of the social worker's job is to recognize individual, family and community resources, of which the client may or may not be aware (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried, & Larsen, 2010). This approach is relational and based on collaboration

between a worker and client (Brun & Rapp, 2001). As Saleebey (1997) emphasized, “everything you do as a social worker will be predicated, in some way, on helping to discover and embellish, explore and exploit client’s strengths and resources in the service of assisting them to achieve their goals” (p. 3). Building on the internal strengths of fathers, as well as their social supports, enables workers to build on already existing capacities and to uncover solutions based on what has worked in the past.

A clear definition for what constitutes successful or optimal fathering does not currently exist (Cabrera, Tamis-Lemonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000). There is literature that speaks to positive parenting, supportive parenting and family strengths (Day, 2001; Leidy, Guerra, & Toro, 2010; Moore, Chalk, Scarpa, & Vandivere, 2002; Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 1997), which will be utilized here to infer aspects of successful fathering, but none is directly focused on the specifics of fathering. More information is needed that specifies the attitudes, behaviors and contexts that lead to successful fathering and which are impediments to its achievement.

Healthy Families America (HFA) is an evidence-based home visiting model focused on promoting child well-being and preventing child abuse and neglect (HFA, 2012). Positive parenting as described by Healthy Families America consists of a focus on the development of healthy attitudes towards parenting including appropriate expectations of one’s child; understanding a child’s capabilities as they develop; enhancing the quality and safety of the home environment; increasing sensitivity, responsiveness and nurturing towards one’s child; and creating a secure relationship with one’s child (HFA, 2012). In this conceptualization, positive parenting is primarily focused around issues of *safety*, *sensitivity*, and *appropriate expectations*.

The literature on family strengths speaks to resources and processes that help families through difficult times. Family strengths are defined as “the set of relationships and processes

that support and protect families and family members, especially during times of adversity and change” (Moore, Chalk, Scarpa, & Vandivere, 2002, p. 1). The literature on family strengths generally speak of family relationships - how family members interact, and family processes - what families do to offer support (Day, 2001). Moore et al. (2002) identified six family strengths indicators associated with positive child development outcomes: *parental positive mental health, household routines, time use, communication and praise, monitoring, supervision, and involvement, and parent-child warmth*. Assessment of these areas provides information regarding pre-existing capacities of families as well as potential areas for families to enhance.

Responsible Fathering. The literature on responsible fathering focuses on four essential domains. These include *establishing paternity, presence, economic support and involvement* (Levine & Pitt, 1995). Research suggests that contextual influences are significant factors in fathering (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998). When one looks at the various aspects of responsible fathering, it is important to consider factors such as the co-parenting relationship, age, education, economic factors, and work prospects.

Roid and Canfield (1994) conducted a study on dimensions of effective fathering. They collected data on a large (n=1,650) general sample of fathers and a smaller (n=42) sample of effective fathers and found significant differences between the two. The factors found to be significant included *commitment, knowing your child, consistency, protecting and providing, love of spouse, active listening and spiritual equipping*. However, there were limitations in the definitional criteria utilized to establish one as an effective father. In order to be considered an effective father, the men had to meet six criteria including involvement, consistency, nurturing, awareness of developmental needs, high commitment to fathering, and they had to be married. The final factor of marriage is a considerable limitation that precluded involvement of many

fathers from analysis. Certainly, many unmarried fathers meet the five other factors used to distinguish effective fathers. This methodological choice excluded fathers who were widowed, separated, divorced, or never married, which is a significant proportion of current fathers (Bzostek, 2008; Shiono & Quinn, 1994; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Additionally, the sample was largely middle class, White fathers, thereby reducing generalizability to low income men of other races.

Generative fathering. Much of the literature on fathering discusses fathers' deficits, inadequacies and limitations. It contrasts fathers to mothers, without recognition that there may be differences and benefits to what fathers provide their children. An exception to this is the theoretical concept of "generative" fathering, which Snarey (1997) defined as "fathering that meets the needs of the next generation across time and context (p. xiii)." Dollahite and Hawkins (1998) use the term generative fathering synonymously with "fatherwork," emphasizing the sustained effort necessary in this construct. They view this work as a calling and as persistent efforts to meet the needs of children. It emphasizes the involvement and responsibility of fathers. Research on fathers as caregivers has demonstrated that fathers spend more time in play, physical stimulation and intellectual development, which are beneficial to child development (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997). Generative fathering is derived from the work of Eric Erikson (1974) and his psychosocial stages. Erikson's seventh stage is the developmental crisis where one strives for productivity and meaning over stagnation. The generative fathering perspective is used to move beyond a deficit perspective of fathering and instead describes what is possible and desirable (Dollahite & Hawkins, 1998). It focuses on the importance of fathers meeting the needs of the next generation and the belief that both fathers and children benefit from these

efforts. Thus, at the same time that fathers are helping their children grow and develop, this very process helps the fathers to grow and develop.

The generative framework recognizes that fathering is a difficult undertaking, but emphasizes that most fathers have the desire and capacity to meet the needs of their children. Rather than viewing fathering as a changing social role, fathering is grounded in meeting the needs of children. Dollahite and Hawkins (1996) view fatherwork as a framework for “good fathering.” The framework conceptualizes eight responsibilities and capabilities of fatherwork as noted by Dollahite, Hawkins, & Brotherson (1997), which include: *Commit* – the responsibility to fulfill obligations to child throughout their life including physical support and mental involvement; *Choose* – the responsibility of choosing to make responsible decisions in the child’s best interest and being involved in daily decision making regarding child; *Create* – the responsibility of using creative energies to problem solve and build opportunities for the child, while providing for one’s child financially and emotionally; *Consecrate* – the responsibility of maintaining a meaningful relationship with child through dedication of time and resources; *Care* – the responsibility of caring for one’s child in a multitude of ways, such as working with current or former partner, being involved and caring for children appropriate to their developmental stage; *Change* – the responsibility to adapt to meet the needs of the child and family situation; *Connect* – the responsibility to form lasting, healthy relationships with child and child’s mother, regardless of marital status, that are responsive to child’s changing needs; and *Communicate* – the responsibility to verbally and nonverbally communicate love and empathy through teaching, listening and support. While this framework has not been extensively tested, Dollahite and Hawkins (1996) propose that it has both empirical and practical application to research with families.

Gross (1996) discussed the danger of assuming a universal model of “good” parenting and argues for the importance of considering contextual variables such as physical environment, social milieu, child factors and parent factors. Fathering is more sensitive to contextual factors than mothering (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erikson, 1998). Contextual forces influencing fathers include such things as social support, economic factors, employment opportunities, cultural expectations, institutional practices, and factors related to the father, mother and child. Social context is defined as the sociocultural forces that form one’s experiences and that impact an individual’s health and behavior, both directly and indirectly (Pasick & Burke, 2008). When discussing fathering, it is essential that it is not discussed in isolation, but rather with a consideration of the psychological, social and environmental factors which are co-occurring.

The next section will focus on better understanding the contexts, attitudes and behaviors of fathers. Better understanding of these areas is important to a more complete understanding of fathering. If we attempt to examine fathers in isolation, we overlook significant contextual differences; fathers may react differently when they are nonresidential, married, depressed, or incarcerated. The varying contexts previously mentioned will influence a father’s behaviors and contributions. By examining the context in which fathering occurs, one acknowledges that fathering is different given different conditions. The chapter will then focus on issues surrounding fathers and maltreatment and the notable lack of research in this area. Discerning the current state of the literature in these areas allows us to better grasp the holes in our current knowledge base and uncover future directions for research.

Context and Theoretical Frameworks

Context involves several settings for development, each of which can impact the other. Thus, context includes looking at the myriad puzzle pieces that are relevant to a person. When examining a particular father, it is important to consider aspects of his background and personality, his family members, his interactions with others, as well as his occupational, social and cultural environment. Context is important because it includes all the aspects within and surrounding one that are influential in development. It is important to remember the variability of context for each father, and that due to individual uniqueness, context will impact each father differently. Fathers do not develop in isolation; their fathering is shaped by their individual and family history, as well as their current relationships, and social and cultural forces. Two theoretical frameworks will be utilized to examine challenges to fathering. The first explores fathering in general and the second, fathering and maltreatment; respectively the theories are the bioecological theory of human development and the developmental ecological model and together they provide the framework for this project.

Bioecological Theory of Human Development

Uri Bronfenbrenner (1979) introduced the bioecological theory of human development which described four levels of systems influencing an individual's development. The levels included the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. He later revised and expanded his theory; the fully expanded model includes Person- Process -Context-Time (PPCT) (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The expanded model explicitly acknowledges the interplay between an individual's characteristics, developmental processes, context and time and will be used as a guide for this project.

Person concepts refer to the importance of biological and genetic aspects of an individual, as well as their personal characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Bronfenbrenner divided these into three types: demand, resource and force characteristics. Person characteristics may include age, gender, skills, intelligence, education and motivation. The *process* concept refers to primary mechanisms in development. “Human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 996). Examples of process include a father’s involvement with his child and his parenting style. *Context* refers to the four interrelated systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem.

The microsystem is a “pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting...” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). A setting could include such places as work or neighborhood, but for this chapter, setting refers to the family. This level of the framework highlights the personal contexts and interpersonal interactions which are so important to fathering. Through analysis of the microsystem level, particular aspects of the father, the father-child relationship, and the co-parenting relationship will be examined to shed light on the contexts of fathering.

A mesosystem is defined as “interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). The mesosystem includes interactions and connections occurring between two or more structures of the microsystem. This may include interactions between family, work, and social life. This level is important for looking at connections between microsystem settings. While this level is

significant in Bronfenbrenner's conceptualization, it will not be examined in this chapter as it is beyond the scope of this project.

The exosystem is "one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). The exosystem includes the larger social system and contexts in which individuals are influenced, although not directly involved. This may include the neighborhood, mass media, schools and government agencies. This aspect of the framework will not be utilized in this chapter as it is beyond the scope of the project.

The macrosystem refers to "consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems that exist or could exist, at the level of subculture or the culture as a whole..." (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26). The macrosystem level is focused on the particular culture and belief systems, recognizing that differences occur based on the geographic, cultural and economic location where one resides. This level of the framework is essential to a thorough examination of fathering. Through examination of race, poverty, and incarceration, a stronger understanding of macrosystem influences are possible.

Time is divided into three sub-factors: micro-time, meso-time, and macro-time. Bronfenbrenner stressed the importance of time when considering an individual's development. This could include time during an activity, the consistency with which certain interactions take place, the history of a relationship, historical influences, and changes in fathering behaviors over time. While an important component of Bronfenbrenner's framework, it will not be examined in this chapter.

Bioecological theory is significant when considering development, because it focuses attention at each of the different levels of development, the interaction between the levels, and acknowledges the importance of looking beyond the individual, to consider other relevant factors (see Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009). The use of bioecological theory for examining children's development is not unusual; while less commonly used, it is also possible to apply bioecological theory to the development of fathering. This framework recognizes the importance of contextual influences as well as the complex interactions between individual, family, community and societal forces. The bioecological framework will be utilized to understand present knowledge of fathers within the dimensions of Person, Process, and Context (microsystem and macrosystem). More clarity about problems in fathering, particularly related to child maltreatment can be provided through a related theory.

Developmental Ecological Model

One way to understand the causes and consequences of maltreatment is through use of the developmental-ecological model (Belsky, 1993). Belsky's work builds on Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development, with a focus on child maltreatment. Through consideration of this model, a general examination of fathering is paralleled with a specific focus on fathers and maltreatment. Belsky's model suggests that parenting behaviors are influenced by factors occurring at multiple levels: *the developmental context*, *the immediate interactional context* and *the broader context*. The first level is the developmental context, or the person level, which includes father and child characteristics such as father's age when child is born, race and ethnicity, sex of the child or developmental delays. The immediate interactional context, or the process level, includes the family environment, fathering processes and parent-child interactions. The broader context includes employment, community and cultural influences. This model

highlights that child abuse and neglect are multidetermined. Prior research utilizing mothers has found support for the views of the developmental-ecological model (Lee, Guterman, Lee, 2008). Less is known about the application of the model with fathers. As the model explicitly states consideration of *parent factors*, it may have applicability to both mothers and fathers.

First Theoretical Level of Fathering

Person level of fathering. Within the bioecological theory, person characteristics refer to personal characteristics of an individual. These can include gender, age, skills, identity, depression and substance abuse. Fathers who have a child when they are young are still resolving issues of their own development and identity, as well as the likelihood that they have not graduated from high school, which often limits their ability to find and maintain employment. Fathers who are depressed or have substance abuse issues frequently have difficulty managing their own functioning; the addition of an infant and its needs can be overwhelming. One must not assume that a father facing any of these issues does not desire fatherhood or aspire to successful fathering. However, one must be cognizant of person level factors which impact fathering. Father's age at time of child's birth, his parenting knowledge and skill, father's identity and mental health and substance abuse status will be explored in this section.

Young age. Teen fathering is generally considered problematic. These young men are frequently considered too young, inexperienced and uncommitted to be fathers. Research suggests that teenage fathers are underserved in comparison to teenage mothers (Rhoden & Robinson, 1997). While studies of teenage fathers are limited, they tend to suggest that many teen fathers desire involvement with their children (Gavin, et al., 2002; Paschal, Lewis-Moss, & Hsiao, 2011; Rhoden & Robinson, 1997). When they become fathers in their teens, young men

generally lack the education to obtain and maintain employment that can support a family. Additionally, they are generally lacking maturity and knowledge of children and parenting.

Those who become young fathers (under 25) generally come from more economically disadvantaged families, have lower levels of education and employment, and have higher levels of delinquent behavior than those who did not become young fathers (Bunting & McAuley, 2004). It is more likely for a man who is African American or Hispanic to become a father before the age of 25 than it is for Caucasian men (Hynes, Joyner, Peters, & DeLeone, 2008).

There is frequently a stereotype that teen fathers are uncaring and uninvolved, which is often untrue; many want to be actively involved (Rhoden & Robinson, 1997). There are multiple obstacles for teen fathers including interrupted education, limited job preparation, and economic disadvantage. In general, these are also young men who have faced racial discrimination, and have limited prospects for economic security. This is a premature developmental transition; while still dealing with determining their own identity, they must quickly deal with caring for another and all that entails. It is likely that these young men are facing high levels of stress as they transition to and enact the role of father. This is a subtype often neglected in the research, with young mothers receiving more attention in both research and services.

The literature indicates differences between determinants of adolescent and adult parenting competence. Regarding adult parenting competence, the three sets of factors considered most important include the psychological resources of the parent, contextual sources of stress and support, and significant child characteristics (Belsky, 1984). A study by Shapiro and Mangelsdorf (1994) considered parenting competence in adolescent mothers. Results indicate that support from the baby's father was positively correlated with self-esteem and maternal efficacy, and negatively correlated with life stress. In a result which differs from adult mothers,

results indicated that there was not a significant correlation between self-esteem, maternal efficacy, or life stress and support from the teen mother's family of origin. While social support from family members may be effective for adult mothers, it appears to be less effective for adolescent mothers. This finding suggests that the context of social support is important; researchers must consider the type and extent of support, as well as who is providing the support. The study found differences between younger and older adolescents in their level of risk and for the type of parenting disturbance, suggesting the importance of recognition of heterogeneity within subgroups. The study included 58 low-income teen mothers from one site in Michigan, with a mean age of 17.2 (SD=1.2 years). The adolescent sample was 90% Caucasian, 5% African American and 5% Hispanic. This research demonstrated the importance of father involvement for adolescent mothers in the study, which decreased her stress level, and increased her self-esteem and effectiveness as a parent. This sample did not include adult or adolescent fathers, therefore the determinants of paternal parenting competence were not considered.

Parenting knowledge and skill. Parents with greater parenting knowledge are more likely to accurately interpret their child's behavior (Bugental & Happaney, 2002). This ability to understand a child's behavior has implications for how one reacts in specific parenting situations. Greater parenting knowledge has been linked to greater satisfaction and competence in parenting (Bornstein et al., 2003). It is likely that when one feels more competent, they derive greater satisfaction from the tasks and are more likely to do it well. The research concerning parenting knowledge tends to involve research conducted on mothers (Berger, Brooks-Gunn, 2005; Bornstein, Cote, Haynes, Hahn, & Park, 2010; Bornstein et al., 2003; Huang, Caughy, Genevro, Miller, 2005). Thus, what is known regarding the impact of parenting knowledge and skills on

parenting is certainly applicable to mothers. While it is likely that much of this information applies to fathers as well, this is unclear from the literature to date.

Identity. Determining one's identity as a father is something most males grapple with at some point. Typical roles for fathers include the breadwinner and nurturer, although it is likely that these roles are not as discrete for most men. Recognition of fluidity among father roles is important for current and future research. For fathers living in poverty or with a low income, there can be a challenge with determining their identity as a father (Forste, Bartkowski, & Jackson, 2009), particularly if they held traditional views regarding a father's role as a breadwinner. Many fathers consider their role that of the breadwinner, and for some who are unable to maintain this role, they may disengage. Others may involve themselves more heavily in the nurturer role when economic challenges exist. Fathers who identify with the father role are positively correlated with involvement (Cabrera et al., 2000). Those who identify more strongly with other roles may not place as much emphasis on their role as a father, thereby impacting their own expectation of involvement.

Olmstead, Futris, and Pasley (2009) conducted a study exploring men's perceptions of their role as fathers. The sample included 34 fathers, either married (n=21) or divorced (n=11). Results of the five focus groups revealed that the fathers discussed seven role identity classifications: provider, teacher, caretaker, disciplinarian, protector, supporter, and co-parent. The results of this study suggest that role identity may not be distinct, as many fathers integrated various roles. Differences were found between divorced and married fathers, with divorced fathers noting that providing was the role identity where they felt they were most frequently judged and that they had fewer opportunities to have quality time with their children. The age of fathers in this study ranged from 27-60, with a mean of 40.8 for married fathers and 40.5 for

divorced fathers. 70% of the total sample had an income greater than \$30,000. Thus, due to the ages and income of the fathers who participated in this study, the findings may not generalize to younger fathers or those living in poverty. Another limitation of this study is the limited racial diversity within the divorced father group, which was 90.9% White and 9.1% Black. The married fathers were more equally split between White (57.1%) and Black (42.9%), but no other racial groups were represented. Further explorations with a more diverse racial composition are needed. An additional concern is that this study did not examine never married fathers, either resident or nonresident, thus knowledge regarding role identity for this population remains unknown.

Studies concerning father identity generally focus on either married or divorced fathers, leaving a huge segment of the fathering population unaccounted for. It will be important to examine perceptions of father identity within the subgroup of never married fathers. As this includes both those who reside with some or all of their children and those who are non-resident, exploring variations concerning father identity within this subgroup is an important area for future research.

Depression. Approximately ten percent of men in the population are expected to experience a depressive episode at some point in their lives (Kessler, McGonagle, Swartz, Blazer, & Nelson, 1993). Research has found differences in rates of depression for subgroups of men. Black fathers are more likely to experience a major depressive episode than are Black men in general (Sinkewicz & Lee, 2011). Research suggests that men who are under the age of 45 have higher rates of depression than those who are over the age of 45 (Blazer, Kessler, McGonagle, & Swartz, 1994). This is significant as the men whose age is predictive of higher rates of depression are likely to include men who have minor children. Furthermore, literature

has begun to examine the extent and consequences of post-partum depression in fathers (Ramchandani, et al., 2011) indicating this is more common than previously believed and may have unique consequences for children.

Evidence from extant literature suggests that symptoms of depression impair healthy parenting practices (Cummings, Keller, & Davies, 2005; Elgar, Mills, McGrath, Waschbusch, & Brownridge, 2007). Much of the research on depression and parenting is focused on mothers. A growing literature exists which suggests that depression in fathers is significant to the parental relationship and child outcomes. The literature on depression in fathers suggests that depression experienced by either parent is a significant barrier to father's successful parenting. Research has also begun to focus on maternal depression and the possible moderating effects of father involvement on child outcomes (Mezulis, Hyde, & Clark, 2004).

The symptoms of depression may differ for fathers and mothers. Research suggests that depressive symptoms in men may include reckless behavior and substance abuse (Cochran & Rabinowitz, 2000), as well as loss of interest in work and family (National Institute of Mental Health, n.d.). Men are also less likely to acknowledge or seek help for feelings of depression (Cochran & Rabinowitz, 2000). There are likely many fathers experiencing symptoms of depression who are neither aware that this is occurring nor seeking treatment to remediate its impact on themselves and their families.

Depression in fathers presents a threat to a father's health and can adversely impact the health of his children. More recently, studies are focusing on the impact of paternal depression on child's behavioral outcomes (Callender, Olson, Choe, & Sameroff, 2012; Elgar, Mills, McGrath, Waschbusch, & Brownridge; Paulson, Dauber, Leiferman, 2011). A positive association has been found for father's depression and the externalizing problems (Callender,

Olson, Choe, & Sameroff, 2012; Connell & Goodman, 2002) and internalizing symptoms of his children (Kane & Garber, 2004). Associations have been found between fathers' depressive symptoms when the child is a baby and increased risk for hyperactivity and conduct problems during the preschool years (Ramchandani, Stein, Evans, O'Connor, 2005).

Mezulis, Hyde, and Clark (2004) examined how father involvement impacts the effect of maternal depression on child behavior problems. Results indicated that paternal depression worsened the effects of maternal depression when fathers were caring for infants a medium to high amount of time. Furthermore, results indicated that paternal depression may not adversely impact child outcomes when fathers spend limited time with the infant. The study used a community sample of 350 mothers, fathers and children. The sample included a majority of European Americans, only 2.6% of participants were African American, thereby representing a limited segment of fathers. Results indicate that facets of father involvement may moderate the impact of maternal depression on subsequent internalizing problems. This result supports the earlier discussion that father involvement is contextual and multifaceted.

Paulson, Dauber, and Leiferman, (2011) used data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study to assess paternal depression, the relationship quality between father and mother, and father involvement in families with an infant. Data included 569 families, nearly half of whom were African American. Results suggest that the quality of the relationship between mother and father predicted all factors of father involvement included in analysis, which included interaction frequency, father's emotional investment in fatherhood, and financial support of the child. Paternal depression was found to negatively impact the quality of the parental relationship and indirectly affected father involvement. Depressed fathers had more conflict with the mother of their child and were less involved in their child's life. Regarding

paternal depression, the study suggests it may be a significant factor in limiting the father's time with his child. When either mother or father experienced depression, it negatively impacted their relationship and played an indirect role in father involvement. The fathers in this study were selected by the child's mother for inclusion in the study. It is likely that the participants reflect fathers who are more involved and have less conflict with the mother, leaving unknown the level and impact of depression for less engaged fathers.

Kane and Garber (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of 23 papers to examine the impact of paternal depression on children's psychopathology and father-child conflict. Results suggest that a father's depression is positively associated with his child's internalizing and externalizing symptoms. Paternal depression was also positively associated with father-child conflict. A limitation of the meta-analysis is that potential moderators such as marital discord, child physical abuse, and child's genetic vulnerabilities were not included in analysis.

While studies examining depression in fathers are not as extensive as those examining mothers, they are beginning to paint a picture of the significance for context within depression. One must consider varying prevalence rates by race, as well as differing rates of depression during the life course of fathers. Researchers and clinicians must begin to assess new fathers for depression, as they currently consider depression in new mothers. Depression in fathers impacts not only fathers, but also mothers and children. Fathers who are depressed have less harmonious relationships with their partners and children and their children are more likely to exhibit internalizing and externalizing symptoms. Research suggests that depression manifests itself differently in men than in women. Some research suggests that men's rates of depression may be higher than currently stated, as they are less likely to seek professional help, and manifest their symptoms differently than women, such as with reckless behavior and substance abuse.

Substance abuse. It is estimated that nearly 12% of children under the age of 18 live with a parent who abuses alcohol or drugs (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2009). Children of alcoholic parents are at higher risk for problems throughout their childhood including insecure attachments during infancy (Das Eiden, Edwards, & Leonard, 2002), greater risk of psychiatric problems such as depression and eating disorders (Drake & Valliant, 1988; Rydelius, 1997), as well as teenage pregnancy (Christoffersen & Soothill, 2003). There exists a well-established link between drug and alcohol abuse and child maltreatment (Blackson, Butler, Belsky, Ammerman, Shaw, & Tarter, 1999; Guterman & Lee, 2005), negative health outcomes (Christofferson & Soothill, 2003), academic difficulties (Blanchard, Sexton, & Morgenstern, 2005; Kolar, Brown, Haertzen, & Michaelson, 1994) as well as negative developmental outcomes for children (Moss, Mezzich, Yao, Gavalier, & Martin, 1995; Osborne & Berger, 2009).

As with other aspects of parenting, many studies focus primarily on mothers. Studies that involve fathers tend to utilize fathers who reside in the home with the child; knowledge is limited regarding the impact of substance abusing fathers who live apart from their child. A recent study by Osborne and Berger (2009) suggests that children are at greater risk for negative outcomes when their substance abusing father resides with them, which is a notable finding given the general push for increased father involvement and residence with children.

A study of substance abusing fathers found differences in their sons levels of aggressivity as well as higher child abuse potential scores (Moss, Mezzich, Yao, Gavalier & Martin, 1995). Studies have also looked at the skills, behaviors and relationships of substance abusing fathers and found these men to have poorer communication skills (Blackson et al, 1999; Moss, Lynch, Hardie, & Baron, 2002), fewer problem solving skills (Jacob, Kahn, & Leonard, 1991), poorer

father-child attachment (Eiden, Edwards, Leonard, 2002; El Sheikh, & Buckhalt, 2003), and provide less monitoring of their children (Fals Stewart, Kelley, Fincham, Golden, & Logsdan, 2004).

A study of men in a methadone maintenance treatment program examined the impact of drug abuse on responsible fathering (McMahon, Winkel, & Rounsaville, 2007). The study compared 106 fathers receiving methadone maintenance treatment and 118 fathers who did not have an alcohol or drug abuse history who lived in the same community. The fathers in this study were between the ages of 21-55, and included those of African American, Hispanic and European heritage who were the biological father of one or more children. Results indicated that the fathers in the methadone treatment program had fewer economic resources to support their family, were less likely to be married to the mother of the focal child, had differences in their definitions of the fathering role, and exhibited a narrower range of positive parenting behaviors. The researchers found that the fathers in the drug treatment program were involved in their children's lives but that responsible fathering was compromised by drug abuse. This study focused on fathers with a history of heroin or other opiate abuse, and therefore may be less applicable to fathers who abuse other substances. Furthermore, these were fathers who voluntarily enrolled in a methadone treatment program, limiting generalizability to those still actively using who have not sought treatment.

Osborne and Berger (2009) conducted a study of substance abuse among fathers and mothers using data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS). Results revealed that a child with a parent who abuses substances is at higher risk for negative health and behavioral effects. They also found that paternal substance abuse presents significant risks for children, whether or not the father lives with the child. The study focused on families with a

three-year old child, and did not explore behavioral difficulties among older children. The subsample used in this study (n=3,027) was large, but only mothers were interviewed. The lack of father perspective on both mother and father substance use is limiting as this was self-report data and possibly reflective of underreporting for self or over reporting for fathers.

More recent research by Lam, Fals-Stewart, and Kelley (2009) indicated positive effects for fathers with alcohol use disorders who received Parent Skills with Behavioral Couples Therapy (PSBCT). They noted statistically significant improvements in substance use, intimate partner violence (IPV), parenting, and Child Protective Services (CPS) involvement for these fathers. The study was small (N=30), but included a control condition where fathers received either Behavioral Couples Therapy or Individual-Based Treatment. A limitation of the study was the lack of instruments assessing risk for child maltreatment. This study shows promise for helping fathers who abuse alcohol decrease alcohol consumption, while improving parenting outcomes.

Paternal substance abuse is linked with multiple negative outcomes for children. Tentative evidence suggests that children of substance abusing fathers may be at higher risk of problems when their father resides with them, although the research suggests that substantial risk for children exists regardless of fathers' residential status (Osborne & Berger, 2009). It is likely that paternal substance abuse has both a direct and indirect impact on children. Directly, it impacts their interactions and availability with their children. Indirectly, it is likely to impact their ability to maintain employment which limits the capacity to provide financially for their children; additionally, it is thought to negatively impact their interactions with the co-parent and reduce their psychological functioning and parenting competence, all of which can negatively

impact children. The existing research indicates that paternal substance abuse is linked with multiple negative behavioral and health outcomes for children.

Developmental context. Within the developmental ecological model, the developmental context examines the father and child characteristics which impact fathering behaviors. Several factors are believed to be important within the developmental context. These include father's age at time of child's birth, father's race and ethnicity, a father's knowledge of child development, age and gender of the child, and disabilities of the child.

Age. The literature suggests that becoming a father at a younger age is linked with a greater likelihood for physical child abuse (Lee, Guterman, & Lee, 2008). Using data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, Lee, Guterman and Lee examined risk factors for paternal physical child abuse. The sample included 1257 fathers who were either married or cohabiting.

Race and ethnicity. Research suggests that there are differences between racial and ethnic groups concerning parenting characteristics and risks for child maltreatment. Previous studies have found Caucasian and African American fathers more likely to utilize psychologically and physically aggressive parenting behaviors than were Hispanic fathers (Fagan, 2000). Lee, Guterman and Lee (2008) found African American fathers more likely than Hispanic or White fathers to spank their child, after controlling for socioeconomic status.

Knowledge of child development. Limited knowledge of child development and inappropriate parenting expectations have both been identified as risk factors for abuse. This author argues that the two factors are part of the same issue, namely limited child development knowledge. This issue has widely been recognized as a risk factor, and increasing knowledge in this area is often a focus of treatment programs (Palusci, Crum, Bliss & Bavolek, 2008; Chen &

Scannapieco, 2006; Tamis-Lemonda, Shannon & Spellman, 2002). Based on prior experiences and formal and informal education, parental knowledge of child development is varied.

Parenting knowledge and attitudes influence parental sensitivity to their child's needs and capabilities (Laurendeau, Gagnon, Desjardins, Perreault, & Kishchuk, 1991). Maltreating parents may have expectations of children which are either too high or too low, both of which are inappropriate (Milner, 2000) and may be problematic for children.

Those parents with limited child development knowledge may have inappropriate expectations of children and their abilities. This is problematic in several ways. When parents assume their children are capable of more than they actually are, parents may become frustrated or angry at what they perceive as misbehavior or refusal to follow directions. It also places children's safety at risk. Children may be expected to stay unsupervised before they are ready or to perform tasks which may be dangerous for children, such as cooking or cleaning with chemicals. Research suggests that parents who have abused or neglected their child have informational deficits and are less knowledgeable about children's development than their matched controls (Twentyman, 1982). Parents are more likely to be abusive when they have unrealistic expectations concerning the capabilities of their children (Rodriguez & Richardson, 2007).

Gender and age of the child. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2011) compiled data on child maltreatment, including information on child victim demographics. Their data indicated that girls had a maltreatment rate of 51.2% and boys of 48.5%. Their data compiled rates of child maltreatment for various age groupings of children, and combined all types of maltreatment in the following findings. Children between the ages of one and three had the highest rates (34%), followed by children four to seven years old (23.4%),

children eight to 11 years old (18.7%), 12-15 years old (17.3%), and 16-17 years old (6.2%).

When examining only physical child abuse, children between three and eight years old had the highest rate (Egley, 1991).

Disabilities of the child. Research has found associations between developmental problems in infancy and child maltreatment (Sidebotham, Heron, & The ALSPAC Study Team, 2003). Multiple studies have observed a higher rate of maltreatment for children with disabilities than for their nondisabled peers, with estimates of increased likelihood ranging from 1.7 to 3.4 (Sullivan & Knutson, 2000; Westat, Inc., 1993). A variety of disabilities were examined, including emotional disturbance, intellectual and developmental disabilities, physical disabilities and learning disabilities. Amongst children with a disability, 55.8% of those who were maltreated were male (Lightfoot, Hill, & LaLiberte, 2011).

Second Theoretical Level of Fathering

Process level of fathering. Within bioecological theory, the process level includes interactions in one's immediate environment. These ongoing activities and reciprocal interactions impact development. They are impacted by characteristics of the person and the environment. This includes both father involvement and parenting style.

Father involvement. Most studies of father involvement rely on mother report (Goeke-Morey, & Cummings, 2007; Gorvine, 2010; Wical & Doherty, 2005). This continues to be the case even when the father is nonresidential and for information regarding children's welfare after a separation or divorce, most of the information is reported by the mother (Saracho & Spodek, 2008; Seltzer & Brandreth, 1994). The majority of children live with their mothers, thus mothers are generally the most accessible. As surveying and interviewing both mothers and fathers is

more time and cost intensive, it has historically not been done. This is especially true when mothers and fathers live separately.

Mother and father reporting of father involvement tend to differ (Pruett, Williams, Insabella, & Little, 2003; Seltzer, 1994). Some research suggests that fathers tend to overestimate their involvement with their child (Wical & Doherty, 2005). It is also possible that mothers may be inaccurate reporters of the types of activities in which fathers and children engage. Thus, including father report and/or observational methods is important to gain a more accurate picture of levels and types of father involvement.

Interaction and involvement. Much of the earlier literature on father involvement focused on a binary view, either fathers were or were not involved. More recent research suggests the need for a more nuanced view. Through a lens that considers the interaction of the various issues; one gains a clearer picture of relevant factors. Holmes and Huston (2010) conducted a large scale study of father involvement, studying the contributions of children, fathers and mothers. Results indicate that father parenting beliefs, child factors, mother's employment and mother's interactions with the child are all important in understanding father-child interaction. However, this study included married, residential fathers, who were largely White with higher than average incomes and educational levels.

Successful fathering clearly means that a father is involved with his child. Involvement may look different from one family to another or over time, as children grow. The concept of father involvement has evolved from a simple bivariate concept of presence versus absence (see Day & Lamb, 2004; Gadsden, Fagan, Ray, & Davis, 2004). Lamb, Pleck and Levine (1985) have identified three components of father involvement: *interaction*, *availability*, and *responsibility*. Interaction refers to direct contact with the child including caretaking and shared

activities. Availability refers to the child's access to their father, even without direct contact, thus the father is able to monitor activities, and become involved if necessary. Responsibility includes arranging for resources for the child and ensuring the child is taken care of. Research suggests that models of father involvement differ for residential and nonresidential fathers (Paulson, Dauber, & Leiferman, 2011), indicating the importance of in-depth explorations of father involvement. Context matters when considering father involvement; one must take into account a child's developmental stage, as well as socio-economic and cultural differences when considering father involvement (Cabrera et al., 2004). Infants and preschoolers require different levels and types of engagement, accessibility and responsibility than do adolescents.

Coley and Hernandez (2006) studied predictors of father involvement in low-income fathers of preschoolers. The study included 239 families from low-income neighborhoods in Boston, Chicago and San Antonio. This study focused exclusively on biological fathers, both resident and non-resident, who were primarily Latino (45%) and African American (44%). Resident fathers demonstrated higher levels of father involvement than their non-resident counterparts. Parental conflict surrounding parenting has a negative relationship on father involvement. Factors that predicted more father involvement included healthy psychosocial functioning, history of stable family relationships, and fathers' human capital characteristics. The literature suggests that fathers are playing a larger role in child care than was previously acknowledged (Dubowitz, 2011). This occurs in both residential and non-residential situations, with both biological fathers and social fathers. Tamis-Lemonda and Cabrera (2002) define social fathering as "males in children's lives who assume fathering roles" (p. 601), which may include relatives, friends or mother's partner. Some research suggests that minority fathers demonstrate more responsibility for child rearing than do White fathers (Hofferth, 2003). Hofferth utilized

data from the 1997 Child Development Supplement to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, a longitudinal study with a nationally representative sample of men, women and children. The subsample used included 1,229 children under the age of 13 who lived in two parent homes consisting of a mother and either a biological father or stepfather. Results indicated that in comparison to White fathers, Black and Hispanic fathers displayed more responsibility for their children; the effect was particularly strong in Hispanic neighborhoods. Results also suggested that the fathers of Black children displayed less warmth, but provided more monitoring; Hispanic fathers provided less monitoring; and both groups displayed more responsibility for child rearing than did White fathers. A limitation of this study is that the data was gathered 15 years ago, and more recent changes to family structure and work patterns may have impacted the findings. Another limitation is the inclusion of only residential fathers. Data from 1997 may no longer be representative of current demographics or contexts. This study suggests that racial/ethnic factors are relevant for study of father involvement and that minority fathers may be more involved in child care than previously believed.

Dubowitz, Lane, Ross, & Vaughan (2004) conducted a study with low income African American fathers to explore their involvement in their children's lives and barriers they face. The study revealed that these fathers were strongly committed to their children and to their role as fathers. The fathers identified the importance of spending time with their child, providing affection, support, and teaching. The father's reported that barriers included not living with the child, their relationship with the child's mother, lacking knowledge and skills and financial limitations. A slight majority of the fathers interviewed were a father figure (mother's partner, stepfather, uncle, or other).

Predictors of paternal involvement. Parent involvement is influenced by three sets of factors, as proposed in Belsky's (1984) model of the determinants of parenting. These include parent characteristics, such as age, sensitivity, and psychological functioning, child characteristics, such as temperament, illness, or age, and social and contextual factors, such as employment and the co-parenting relationship. Belsky's model proposes that parental factors are most important and impact parenting in both direct and indirect ways.

Paternal characteristics. Research suggests that father's psychosocial distress (Edin, 2000; Roggman, Boyce, Cook, & Cook, 2002) and antisocial behaviors (Edin, 2000) are correlated with lower levels of involvement with their children. This may be due to father's being overwhelmed with their own depression or anxiety and thus having fewer emotional resources available for their children. It may also be that mothers are limiting contact between the children and their fathers when psychological or antisocial issues are present.

Child characteristics. Studies have suggested that middle-class married fathers have less involvement with children with more difficult temperaments (McBride, Schoppe, & Rane, 2002). A study with low-income fathers found that when fathers resided with their children, a more difficult child temperament was predictive of more parent conflict, and subsequently less father involvement (Coley, & Hernandez, 2006). Better understanding child temperament in the context of the parenting relationship could shed light on father's relationship and involvement with his child. Understanding differences between residential and nonresidential fathers, as well as how parental conflict mediates this factor is important for increased understanding of the complexity within these relationships.

Other studies have found that differences in child gender are predictive of different types of father involvement. Lindsey and Caldera (2006) studied interactions between mothers, fathers

and children. Results suggested that fathers displayed more positive emotions with boys than with girls. The study included 60 married couples with a young child (11-15 months old). The study focused on triadic interactions and did not observe father and child interactions without mothers present. The limited range of children may have impacted results. As the study only included married couples, it would be important to examine nonmarried couples.

A study by Leavell, Tamis-LeMonda, Ruble, Zosuls and Cabrera (2012) examined father's activities with their toddler and preschool age children and found differences in father's activities with children of different genders. Results indicated that fathers participated in physical play more with boys than girls. Fathers of girls more frequently participated in literacy activities. The study included 426 biological fathers (50% Caucasian, 31% Latino, and 19% African American). Incorporating social fathers and step-fathers in future studies would enhance our current knowledge of father engagement with children of both genders.

Social and contextual factors. Employment history and stability are thought to be significant factors to father involvement with their children. Fathers who are employed tend to be more involved with their children, when considering low-income, nonresidential, minority fathers (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999). Fathers who are stably employed are more likely to have a consistent work schedule and regular income, both of which may play a role in their time and support with their children.

Father's relationships with their own fathers in their families of origin are another potential factor, whether the parenting was positive or negative. Furstenberg and Weiss (2000) examined paternal involvement and its consequences using data from the Baltimore Parenthood Study. They found that becoming a father at a young age was more likely when a young man did not grow up with a stable biological or step- father in his life. Positive involvement of a man's

biological father during his childhood may be a source of resilience and increase the likelihood that he remains involved with his own child (Fagan & Palkovitz, 2007).

Another significant consideration is the co-parenting relationship. Co-parenting is defined by McHale and Lindahl (2011) as “the nature of the alliance between the two (or more) adults who together share responsibility for the child’s care and upbringing” (p. 7). This definition implies that there may be two or more adults who care for a child and that the way they work together is at the core of the co-parenting relationship. Research suggests that when there is greater conflict between the parents, the fathers are less involved (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998). Research has found a correlation between parental conflict and lower father involvement for both married (Cummings & Davies, 1994) and unmarried parents (Furstenberg, 1995). Clearly, the co-parenting relationship is significant for the amount of time and level of involvement father’s play in their children’s lives.

Parenting style. Positive parenting has been described as parents who have high expectations of their children as well as having high demands for children, which describe characteristics of authoritative parenting (Kawabata, Alink, Tseng, van Ijzendoorn, & Crick, 2011), one of three primary styles described by Baumrind. Baumrind (1968, 1971) developed a framework identifying three major parenting styles, *authoritarian*, *permissive* and *authoritative*. The styles are distinguished on two primary dimensions, responsiveness/warmth and demandingness/control. The division into three styles allowed for differentiation among parents, thus permitting researchers to look for differences in child outcomes based on different characteristics of parenting. Baumrind’s research was primarily based on middle income, highly educated, White parents in the United States; therefore, it is unclear if these styles hold true for parents of another race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

The authoritarian style is characterized by high levels of control and maturity demands, combined with low levels of nurturance and unclear communication. Parents with an authoritarian style attempt to shape a child's behavior according to an absolute standard (Baumrind, 1968). Parents with this style tend to value obedience and strict rules, and place less value on verbal reasoning. Authoritarian parents generally utilize punitive discipline tactics. Research has shown that an authoritarian style of parenting is a predictive factor in children's use of physical aggression towards peers (Kawabata, Alink, Tseng, van Ijzendoorn, & Crick, 2011).

The permissive style combines low levels of control and maturity demands with high levels of nurturance and clear communication. Parents utilizing this style are generally accepting of children's behavior, and make few demands for responsibility and prescribed behavior (Baumrind, 1968). Parents with this style tend to value reasoning and explanation, but frequently lack strict rules and consistency in discipline. They often consult with the child regarding rules and decisions. This style of parenting has been linked with relational aggression among children of various ages (Kawabata et al., 2011).

The authoritative style is characterized by high levels of control and maturity demands, as well as high levels of nurturance and clear communication. Parents utilizing this style combine high expectations with reasoning and explanation; they also tend to take into account the child's interests and uniqueness (Baumrind, 1968). Boys raised in authoritative homes have been found to be more socially responsible; authoritative parenting is associated with high achievement for girls (Baumrind, 1971). More recent research has linked this style with greater levels of social competence and lower levels of aggression and delinquency (Kawabata et al., 2011; Mize & Pettit, 1997; Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 1997).

There are mixed reports in the literature regarding whether mothers and fathers tend to interact and care for their children in different ways. Research generally indicates that mothers tend to interact in direct care activities such as feeding and dressing, while fathers generally are involved in more interactive pursuits such as playing games (Bronstein, 1984; Brussoni & Olsen, 2011). While all of these activities are important, literature suggests that each impacts child development differently. Studies have suggested that mothers tend to engage children in affectionate behaviors and verbal exchanges (Belsky & Volling, 1987), while fathers tend to engage children in playful activities (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997; Lamb, 2002). A 2005 study with African American families contradicts these findings. This study reported that mothers and fathers interacted with their infants in similar ways (Rooparine, Fouts, Lamb, & Lewis-Elligan, 2005). This study compared differences in lower, middle and upper socioeconomic families and included a community sample comprising a total of 62 families, with approximately twenty from each socioeconomic group. While the sample was small and included a majority of residential fathers, it adds to the debate concerning cultural differences in caretaking.

Research suggests that fathers encourage their children to take more risks than do mothers (Paquette, 2004). Brussoni and Olsen (2011) conducted a study examining father's attitudes toward child injury prevention. Results suggest that fathers believe there is value in risk-taking opportunities, even when the possibility of minor injury is involved. These smaller risk-taking opportunities may provide children with opportunities to explore and grow. While the literature regarding fathers and risk-taking is limited, it suggests a unique aspect of fathering with potential benefits for children.

Immediate interactional context. Within the developmental ecological framework, the immediate context is concerned with the family environment, fathering processes and parent-

child interactions. This level considers the ways parents take care of and interact with their children. Dimensions of importance within this level include attachment, empathy, stress, discipline, intimate partner violence (IPV), and goodness of fit.

Attachment. Bowlby's (1969/1982) work suggested that infants were motivated by closeness and security to a caregiver. This was a shift from the psychodynamically oriented theories of the time, which suggested that infants were motivated by food or gratification. Inadequate attachment is a frequent target of intervention for both children and parents where maltreatment has occurred. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Wall (1978) identified three patterns of attachment behavior. These included secure, insecure/avoidant, and insecure/resistant. A fourth pattern, disorganized/disoriented, was later identified (Main & Solomon, 1990).

Research indicates a link between a disorganized attachment style and abusive and/or neglectful behaviors of caregivers (Cicchetti, Rogosch, & Toth, 2006). Attachment style is considered to be derived from a caregiver's response to the proximity-seeking behavior of the infant. Bowlby (1969/1982) hypothesized that through the interactions with a caregiver and the way the caregiver responds to the child's behavior, the child develops a cognitive representation of the self, caregiver, and the patterns of interaction between them. Parental behavior that consistently responds to the needs of the infant and provides them with needed comfort is most associated with a secure attachment style (Egeland & Farber, 1984). Caregivers who inconsistently respond to the child's needs for closeness, who reject the child's attempts for closeness, or who abuse or neglect the child are considered to lead to less secure attachment styles, which may result in emotional or behavioral problems for the child (Allen, 2011). Thus, development of a secure attachment is important for the relationship between the caregiver and child as well as for the child's socio-emotional development.

Empathy. The literature describes various historical definitions of empathy. Two of the more recent definitions of empathy will be described. One definition describes empathy as having two components, affective and cognitive. Affective empathy involves the ability to vicariously experience others' emotions, while cognitive empathy involves the ability to understand another's perspective (Rosenstein, 1995; Psychogiou, Daley, Thompson, & Sonuga-Barke, 2008). Kilpatrick (2005), describes parental empathy as an incorporation of four factors, attention to child's emotional cues, attributions regarding the reasons the child feels that way, experiencing positive emotions which are child focused, and child-focused helpful behavioral response.

There are several ways empathy is thought to be important. Empathy may assist parents' ability to recognize and react to their child's needs (Psychogiou, Daley, Thompson, & Sonuga-Barke, 2008). Research suggests that empathy is important in multiple parenting behaviors, such as being understanding, comforting, helpful, and flexible (Wiehe, 1997). Additionally, higher levels of empathy may increase the parents' ability to recognize the importance of the child's act or cognition *to the child*. Those with lower levels of empathy may find the act or cognition personally unimportant, without recognizing the child's perspective. Research suggests that limited empathy is a risk factor for child maltreatment (Wiehe). Low levels of empathy may increase the likelihood that a parent does not see the child's perspective or is not sensitive to the child's needs, thereby placing the child at risk.

Psychogiou, Daley, Thompson and Sonuga-Barke (2008) conducted a study with 268 mothers of school-age children to test the hypotheses that maternal empathy might be lower where mothers or their children display symptoms of psychopathology. An adapted version of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983) was utilized to measure empathy. The results

suggest that child psychopathology contributes to decreased empathy directed toward the child by the mother. The mother's psychopathology contributed to egoistic personal distress, which was described as feeling upset or disturbed, and focusing on the mother's own reaction, rather than the child's feelings (Psychogiou et al.) This study involved participants of nine schools in England and did not indicate maltreatment status.

Perez-Albeniz and de Paul (2004) conducted research to study gender differences in empathy. They compared mothers and fathers at high-risk and low-risk of child physical abuse. This study involved 331 parents in Spain. Results suggested that high-risk parents showed deficiencies in general empathy and empathy toward their family members (Perez-Albeniz & de Paul, 2004). Mothers in the high-risk category for physical abuse evidenced more 'personal distress' than mothers or fathers in the low-risk group. Fathers considered high-risk for physical abuse showed less 'perspective taking' than mothers or fathers in the low-risk group.

A study by Rosenstein (1995) examined parental empathy relating to risk assessment in Child Protective Services (CPS). The study involved 29 caretakers who were either involved with CPS or were being assessed for child physical abuse in Texas. Results of the study suggest that a relationship exists between parental levels of empathy and child physical abuse (Rosenstein, 1995). This study found that a high level of cognitive empathy is correlated with a lack of role reversal, indicating that the parent is not engaging in the expectation that the child should be sensitive to the parents' needs.

Stress. The literature indicates that major life events, daily hassles and perceived stressors can have a significant impact on parenting (Crnic & Low, 2002; Lee, Perron, Taylor, & Guterman, 2011). Concrete stressors include such things as health problems, financial difficulties, and concerns with housing (Panzarine, 1986). Lazarus (1990) defines psychological

stress as resulting from “the interplay of system variables and processes, depends on an appraisal by the person that the person-environment relationship at any given moment is one of harm, threat, or challenge” (p. 4). Parents who experience higher levels of stress tend to display higher levels of controlling, punitive and abusive behaviors toward their children (Webster-Stratton, 1988). Stress has been identified as a risk factor for child abuse (Black, Heyman, & Slep, 2001; Milner, 1993). Francis and Wolfe (2008) conducted a study examining cognitive and emotional differences between abusive and non-abusive fathers. The sample included 25 abusive fathers, the majority were Caucasian (87%), and primarily married (47.8%) or divorced (39.1%). These fathers reported significantly more parenting stress than their nonabusive counterparts studied. The fathers included in this study were required to have some contact with their children at the time the study began, which excluded fathers in prison or whose children were removed due to abuse or neglect. This may impact the results as important subsets of fathers were excluded from the study. It is possible that the fathers with more serious types of abuse history or criminal backgrounds were excluded.

Parenting stress involves anxieties and negative feelings induced while caring for one's child and are often tied more strongly to parenting behavior than are work or relationship stress (Deater-Deckard, 1998). While parenting stress can have important consequences for families, research concerning its relationship to fathers has been limited (Bronte-Tinkew, Horowitz, Carrano, 2010). Abidin (1992) characterizes parental stress as parents' perception of children's difficult behavior, lack of support, and lacking competence in parenting. The parenting stress framework was developed by Abidin and Burke (1978) and later expanded by Abidin (1990, 1992). It asserts that stresses experienced by a parent result from parent characteristics, couple characteristics, child characteristics, and situational factors connected to the parenting role. This

framework theorizes that greater levels of parenting stress are conversely related to functional parenting.

Holmes and Rahe (1967) developed the Social Readjustment Rating Scale which rated stress based on the experience of major life changes, such as divorce, death, birth of a child, and marriage. These types of events have been used to conceptualize a person's stress level. While important, they don't account for smaller, recurrent events individuals' experience.

Crnic and Low (2002) discuss parenting daily hassles, which are described as those stressors experienced by all parents, regardless of socioeconomic status, which occur in a variety of contexts. These include such daily events as running errands, being interrupted by children, cleaning up after children, the daily chores involved in parenting, a lack of personal time or time for the marital relationship. This type of stress effects parent's attitudes and beliefs, their psychological health, and the way they behave toward their children (Crnic & Low, 2002).

Rodriguez and Richardson (2007) conducted a study on predicting parental child maltreatment risk. Results indicated that parenting stress predicted physical aggression, over reactive discipline, and child abuse potential. The study included a community sample of 115 parents, a minority (n=29) of whom were fathers. 92% of the sample was White and the majority of the sample was living with a partner. Thus, results may not apply to more racially diverse, non-residential fathers.

Another important factor to consider when discussing stress is one's perception of an event or experience. People react differently to similar experiences, with one perceiving an event as highly stressful, while for another it may be mildly stressful. Perceived stress from a combination of major life events, parenting stress, and daily hassles can have a negative impact on parenting (Abidin, 1990; Belsky, 1984). Identification of concrete and perceived stress is

important when assessing a parent's level of stress. Furthermore, assessing one's coping with stress is also important. For those with well-developed coping skills, even higher levels of stress may have a less serious impact than for those with limited coping abilities and resources.

Attachment, empathy and stress are factors in the immediate context of the developmental-ecological model relating to the level of each a parent experiences and its subsequent impact on a child. Discipline is another factor within the immediate context which relates to the ways a parent manages a child's misbehavior and the degree to which they utilize physical punishment.

Discipline. Physical punishment is often used synonymously with corporal punishment (CP). When discussing this issue, it is first important to establish what constitutes CP. According to Straus (2000), CP is "the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correction or control of the child's behavior" (p. 1110). CP involves inflicting pain on the child, such as spanking or slapping, in an effort to manage the behavior of the child.

Research indicates that a majority of parents in the United States spank their children. Spanking is one form of corporal punishment; other common forms include spanking with an object and slapping. Researchers report corporal punishment rates greater than 90% for American children (Straus, 2000; Zolotor, Theodore, Chang, Berkoff & Runyan, 2008). Use of CP is generally highest during the toddler years (Straus & Stewart, 1999). Research has found that use of CP is a direct risk factor for child physical abuse (Gershoff, 2002).

Research suggests that children who receive physical punishment are more likely to suffer mental health problems such as depression and anxiety and feelings of hopelessness (Durrant, 2008). Zolotor et al. (2008) note that CP is linked with adverse consequences in

childhood which continue into adulthood. The consequences do not appear transient; rather, it would appear that the consequences may be seen by the spouse and children of childhood CP recipients.

Some studies have found increased behavioral problems among those who received CP. Gershoff (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of 27 studies and all found physical punishment was correlated with more aggression. Parents who utilize physical punishment model for their child that hitting is an acceptable behavior. When children see conflicts resolved with violence, they may not seek alternative methods of conflict resolution. These children may then become aggressive with siblings and peers.

A study of the paternal psychosocial characteristics of fathers utilizing CP with their 3-year-old children was conducted by Lee, Perron, Taylor and Guterman (2011). The study used data from the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study, which included information from 2,309 biological fathers. The sample included married, cohabiting and nonresidential fathers. The sample was 47% African American, 27% Hispanic, and 22% Caucasian. The mean household income reported was \$46,061. The data was primarily self-reported by fathers, although certain child characteristics were reported by the mother. Results indicated that issues related to the father and child were both important. Significant psychosocial issues related to the father included paternal stress, alcohol and drug use, and major depression, which were significantly associated with higher use of CP. Boys were more likely to receive CP than were girls; externalizing behavior problems in a child were correlated with more CP. A limitation of the study is that it only included biological fathers, the majority of whom were married or cohabiting, which may not generalize to social fathers and nonresidential fathers. Another

limitation is that the study only considered father's behavior toward children who were three years old. Further study involving children of other age groups would be beneficial.

Horn, Joseph, and Cheng (2004) conducted a systematic review regarding physical punishment and child behavior among African-American children, which found neutral or beneficial outcomes (lower levels of aggression, deterrent effect on subsequent fighting) to non-abusive physical punishment for this population. There is some belief that due to the high incidence of CP in this population, it is not as stigmatizing as it might be in other populations. Baumrind (1994) traces the use of CP in African-American families to African tradition and the high value within these families for obedience and respecting authority. There is controversy concerning whether CP may be more harmful or helpful to some cultural groups than others, and current research shows mixed reviews.

Many researchers believe that other methods of disciplining children are at least as effective as CP, without the risk of adverse side effects or escalation into abuse (Straus & Stewart, 1999). What initially starts as a spanking may turn into abuse if parents are angry or unaware of the intensity of the spanking. This is particularly a risk for parents who utilize an object such as a belt, spoon, or switch, rather than an open hand. There is a thin line between physical punishment and abuse, and the former may turn into the latter, even when unintended by the parent.

There are both definitional and methodological issues which cloud this issue. There are a variety of definitions of child abuse, without a nationally recognized standard, which can make it challenging to distinguish between CP and abuse. Some of the literature concerning CP and maltreatment combines mild to moderate spanking with more abusive CP and lumps them in the

same category. It is difficult to say what the true consequences of physical punishment are if studies combine it with abusive practices.

Intimate partner violence. The literature also indicates a link between child maltreatment and intimate partner violence (IPV). In a study concerning the co-occurrence of IPV and child maltreatment, 40.7% of parents who were accused of maltreating a child were also found to have perpetrated IPV (Dixon, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Browne, Ostapuk, 2007). These figures are consistent with previous research which found the average rates of co-occurrence between 30 and 60% (Edleson, 1999). Families experiencing one type of family violence are at risk for experiencing the other. The impact on children living in these families is concerning. Adolescents who experience both physical abuse and exposure to IPV are more likely to have symptoms of internalizing and externalizing problems that are in the clinical range (Bourassa, 2007).

Bourassa (2007) conducted a study analyzing the impact of both child physical abuse and exposure to interparental violence on adolescents. The sample included teenagers between the ages of 16 to 18 in New Brunswick, Canada from three different school districts. The final sample included 490 teens, all of whom were French speaking. 78.4% of the teens resided in two-parent homes, 18% lived with one parent or a blended family. Results indicate that 24.9% of the sample had experienced both child abuse and exposure to interparental violence. Those who experienced the co-occurrence of the two forms of violent behavior were more likely to experience internalized and externalized symptoms falling within the clinical range. Results suggest that when interparental violence and child physical abuse co-occur, there is a significantly greater negative impact for teens than for interparental violence exclusive exposure. There were a high number of refused or rejected questionnaires, 30.1 % did not respond and

20.1% were rejected due to excessive missing responses, which may have impacted the results and subsequent generalizability. It is also possible that since the study occurred in Canada with French teens there are cultural issues which limit generalizability.

Exploring the rates of co-occurrence between child physical abuse and interparental violence is important for understanding the extent and frequency with which these occur. It is also important to better understand father's perceptions of the impact of IPV on their children. Salisbury, Henning and Holdford (2009) conducted a study of partner-abusive men to examine their attitudes regarding children's exposure to interparental conflict and their risk factors for child abuse. The sample included 3,824 men residing in Tennessee who attended a court-ordered evaluation after an assault conviction for IPV. 2,508 (77.6%) of these men had a fathering role with a minor child, either as a biological parent, stepfather, foster parent or social father. Two-thirds of these men acknowledged that their child had been exposed to interparental conflicts. A minority of men (27.3%) reported that their child was affected by fighting; those men who were younger and had less education were less likely to believe their child was impacted by the conflicts. The study also analyzed risk factors for child abuse and found they were present in much of the sample. These risk factors included limited education, unemployment, substance abuse, child behavioral problems and marital dissatisfaction. The majority of fathers in the sample (89.9%) had four or more risk factors for child abuse. This study highlights the potential for child abuse when IPV is present. It also emphasizes fathers' limited understanding and belief of the negative consequences their behavior may hold for their children. Limitations of this study include the high percentage of men (57.5%) whose scores on the Child Abuse Potential Inventory were deemed invalid. Additionally, all instruments were self-report and as this study

dealt with sensitive and socially undesirable behaviors, fathers may have attempted to minimize negative behaviors.

Increasing understanding of the prevalence and impact of IPV and child maltreatment is an important direction for researchers. It is clear that there is a significant overlap in these two types of abuse. As knowledge is increased in this area, researchers and practitioners can better assess and treat when knowledge of one type of violence is present. It is also important to better understand father's perceptions of the impact of these two types of violence on their children.

Goodness of fit. The concept of goodness of fit incorporates temperament, in addition to other relevant biological, sociological and psychological influences. It examines the relative goodness or poorness of fit between the parent and child.

If there is a 'goodness of fit' between the parents' attitudes and practices and the child's temperamental ability to master these demands, development will proceed smoothly and the basis will be laid for a healthy personality structure. If, on the contrary, there is a 'poorness of fit' so that the child's temperament cannot cope adequately with these social expectations, excessive stress for the child is likely, and the basis will be laid for unhealthy personality development ... (Thomas & Chess, 1989, p. 257)

An example of poor fit could include a child with a very high intellect being raised by parents with an intellectual disability, or a child who is more interested in athletic endeavors whose parents favor artistic pursuits. While neither case is necessarily problematic, when parents are frustrated or lack the interest or capacity to alter their expectations and reactions to the child, problems may arise. Goodness of fit is a relational construct which is dynamic, with each partner capable of influencing the other (Seifer, 2000). The benefit to better understanding

goodness of fit within a parent and child dyad is that the possibility for individualized treatment strategies can be developed which take into account both child and parent factors.

Chess and Thomas developed a parent guidance approach which included a focus on “parents’ *behavior and overtly expressed attitudes*” (Chess & Thomas, 1986, p. 63). The parents were trained to respond to each child differently, depending on the child’s temperament and other characteristics. Parents were provided with new information and suggestions targeted toward the needs of the specific child, in order to start where the child was and honor that child’s unique style.

Studies exploring temperament and child maltreatment are limited. Researchers have noted an increased risk of child abuse and neglect for children with “difficult” temperaments (Black, Heyman, & Slep, 2001). Additionally, mothers who reported a more difficult temperament of their infant or toddler was found to be a risk factor for emotional neglect (Harrington, Black, Starr, & Dubowitz, 1998).

Transactional model. Sameroff and Fiese (2000) discuss the interplay of child characteristics and the environment. The child influences the environment as the environment influences the child. As the parents are significant factors in a child’s development, consideration of the way the child influences the parent and the parent the child must be considered. Developmental outcomes are produced by blending of the individual and their experiences (Sameroff & Fiese, 2000). By using the transactional model, in combination with a temperamental model, we see that the child’s nature plays a part in the experiences they receive, specifically in regard to parenting. “...the nature of the child transforms experiences that are socially available” (Sameroff & Fiese, 2000, p. 17). Thus, what is adequate or optimal parenting for one child is not for another. The uniqueness and specific needs of each particular child

determine the most optimal environmental and parenting experiences.

The issue of bidirectional parent-child influences has only recently been a focus in the parenting literature (Teti & Candelaria, 2002). This acknowledgement that parents influence children, at the same time that children influence their parents is of extreme importance. It refocuses the way parenting is viewed. By recognizing this transactional process, it is more likely that parents who have struggled with their children, can learn new ways to approach the situation, rather than repeating ineffective patterns. Through the realization that children are unique and come into the world with a distinctive temperament, it is possible for parents who were previously feeling incompetent, to reframe the situation, and find solutions that better meet the needs of the child and the parent.

Third Level of Fathering

Context: Microsystem Level of Fathering. Bronfenbrenner's microsystem level includes the relations and interactions between a person and their immediate environment, in this case, the family. This level includes recognition of bidirectional influences, in that a father can influence his child and the child can influence the father. Child factors at the microsystem level include age, gender and temperament. Co-parental relational factors at this level include family structure, marital status and quality of the co-parenting relationship.

Child factors. Factors regarding children are considered to impact fathering. These include such aspects as age, gender and temperament. Bioecological theory recognizes the importance of bidirectional influences and that factors related to the child may impact the father.

Age. While there is limited research examining the interaction of child age and fathering, some literature suggests that child age plays a role in father involvement. In general, findings suggest that father involvement increases once children leave infancy, peaking between

preschool and elementary school age, and then decreasing during adolescence (Bruce & Fox, 1999; Pleck, 1997). This may vary depending on father's residential status as Hetherington and Hagan (1986) found nonresidential fathers were more involved with older children.

Bruce and Fox examined patterns of father involvement among 162 fathers living in Tennessee. Results indicate that fathers of preschoolers had the highest levels of involvement (mean = 2.86), followed by fathers of school age children (mean = 2.81), infants and toddlers (mean = 2.72), and adolescents (mean = 2.59). The total scores of father involvement were calculated from an average of the scores on each of the seven items of the instrument. Limitations of the study include that father involvement was assessed by self-report using an adapted measure from Ahrons and Miller (1993). As the adapted measure had not previously been tested, its reliability and validity is unclear. Additionally, the sample was primarily White, of middle and upper-middle incomes.

Gender. There is some research suggesting that fathers are more likely to behave differently with children of different genders (Bronstein, 1984; Renk et al., 2011; Tamis-Lemonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb, 2004), although other research has found no effect (Holmes & Huston, 2010). Extant research has focused on father's variations in levels of attention, sensitivity, positive regard and intrusiveness with boys and girls. Better understanding father's interactions and differences based on child gender are important for increasing knowledge of fathering behaviors.

Bronstein (1984) examined differences in mother's and father's behaviors toward children in a study with Mexican families. The study involved 78 parent-child dyads, consisting of father-son (n=22), father-daughter (n=15), mother-son (n=26), and mother-daughter (n=15) pairs from 19 families of lower and middle socioeconomic levels. Results suggest that fathers

differed in their behavior towards boys and girls, while mothers did not. Specific differences included fathers' provided more instruction, attention and cognitive involvement toward sons and were gentler with daughters. While the study involved 78 dyads it is important to note that the pairs represent 19 families, so care must be taken with generalization. The study involves Mexican fathers living in central Mexico, extending knowledge regarding this subgroup of fathers. This study provides some support for the idea of differences in fathering based on child gender.

Another study which examined differences in fathering behaviors based on child gender is that of Tamis-LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb (2004). The study focused on father and mother contributions to their toddler's language and cognitive development. The sample included 290 biological, resident fathers and their partners from the National Early Head Start evaluation study. The majority of the mothers (75%) were married to the target child's biological father. The majority of fathers were European American (60%), but also included African American (21.7%), Latino (15.2%) and other (3%). This study found that mothers and fathers both provided positive and cognitively stimulating behaviors to their children. Results suggest that fathers were less sensitive, exhibited less positive regard and were more intrusive toward their sons than daughters. A limitation of this study is that it included a brief observation of free play behavior. Both due to the brevity and type of observation (free play), it is possible that more positive behaviors were captured. Additionally, this study only examined resident fathers, who tended to be older, were more likely to be employed, and had more education than other fathers in the National Evaluation of Early Head Start. Further studies with low-income, nonresident fathers are needed to explore variations in fathering based on child gender.

While these studies are by no means conclusive, they provide support for the idea that fathers are more likely than mothers to vary their behaviors with their children based on child gender. These studies examined parental sensitivity, attention, and cognitive involvement within specific subgroups of fathers. Further studies with other subgroups will be important for providing a richer understanding of such differences. Additionally, increasing understanding of other areas of difference between mothers and fathers such as exploration of fathering behaviors related to gendered toys, activities and roles could be an important avenue.

Temperament. In the 1950's, Chess and Thomas (1996) began work on the New York Longitudinal study (NYLS), hypothesizing that children's behavioral problems may be caused by other issues than parental fault. The work in the NYLS study, led to the development of nine categories. "Temperament... concerns the *way* in which an individual behaves" (Chess & Thomas, 1996, p. 32) and can be equated to the term 'behavioral style.' "Each refers to the *how* rather than the *what* (abilities and content) or the *why* (motivation) of behavior" (Chess & Thomas, 1996, p. 33). The nine categories include *activity level, rhythmicity, approach or withdrawal, adaptability, threshold of responsiveness, intensity of reaction, quality of mood, distractibility, and attention span and persistence*. From these categories, they developed three temperamental constellations, which were clusters of aforementioned categories, which accounts for 65% of the NYLS sample. The remaining children in the sample did not fit into one of these constellations. Temperamental traits are meant to indicate normal variation in behavior.

Rothbart and Ahadi (1994) define temperament as "constitutionally based individual differences in reactivity and self-regulation, influenced over time by heredity, maturation, and experience" (p. 55). The authors are describing unique characteristics that a child is born with; a way of relating to the world that they bring with them. These characteristics may be influenced

by experiences such as parenting, but are largely set before birth. To the extent that parent training can incorporate knowledge relating to different child styles, parents are likely better prepared to parent each child given their individual style. While parenting research concerning child temperament is limited, existing findings indicate that parenting a child with a more difficult temperament is associated with parenting stress (McBride, Schoppe, & Rane, 2002), although most of the findings focus on mothers (Gelfand, Teti, & Radin Fox, 1992; Mulsow, Caldera, Pursley, & Reifman, 2002).

Co-parental factors. Examination of marital status, family structure, and co-parenting conflict are each relevant to fathering. Fluidity and variation exist concerning marital status as well as a wide range of family structures. Consideration of the co-parenting relation and conflict within that relationship has been found to impact fathering behaviors both directly and indirectly.

Marital status. Data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study found that after a nonmarital birth, the percentage of fathers living apart from their child grew from 48% at one year to 56% at three years, and 63% at five years (Carlson, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008). Thus, a substantial percentage of unmarried fathers are living apart from their children. Forste, Bartowski and Jackson (2009) found that unmarried men with a close relationship to their father mirrored much of the parenting they received. The article suggested that married men tend to look to their wives for cues about fathering. Without a spouse, they lacked directives about good fathering so they utilized the modeling they witnessed while growing up. However, men without a close relationship with their own father often lacked a script for positive fathering and sought to avoid the model they were provided.

A good deal of literature focuses on the importance of marriage in responsible fathering. “It is the quality of the marital process, rather than the legal or coresidential status, that most

affects fathering” (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998, p. 286). While caring and collaborative marriages may be ideal for responsible fathering and child outcomes, these positive aspects of the relationship cannot be assumed. Many marriages are less than ideal, with overt or covert anger and resentment, which provide a less than optimal atmosphere for children. An unhealthy relationship cannot be assumed to be better for children, simply because the parents chose to wed. More detailed research that parses out elements of the relationship quality of parents as well as child outcomes is needed.

Family structure. Given the increase in nonresidential biological fathers, and the changes in births outside of marriage, it is increasingly important that nontraditional family structure is considered. Multipartnered fertility (MPF) is described by Carlson and Furstenberg (2006) as adults who have biological children with more than one partner, which is an increasingly common phenomenon in families. Fathers are also parenting children with whom they do not reside. Many men are parenting one or more children that are not their biological child, which is frequently labeled “social fathering.” Tamis-LeMonda and Cabrera (2002) define social fathering as “males in children’s lives who assume fathering roles” (p. 601). Social fathers may include the romantic partners of mothers, step-fathers, uncles, grandfathers and close family friends.

Research on fathers must consider the importance of social fathers or father figures (Dubowitz, 2009). Due to high rates of divorce, remarriage, and an increase in children born to parents who are unmarried, social fathers are increasingly common. It is estimated that thirty percent of children will live with a social parent, generally a father figure, during childhood (Bumpass, Raley, & Sweet, 1995). The literature reports mixed findings on the importance of a biological relationship with the child and its impacts on child protective service (CPS)

involvement (Berger, Paxson, & Waldfogel, 2009; Bellamy, 2009), with some researchers finding that non-biological fathers are more likely to abuse a child who is not their biological offspring while others have not found this link.

More remains to be known regarding the extent to which a social fathering relationship impacts child development. Research is beginning to recognize that the context in which social fathering occurs is likely to impact this; for instance, the age of the child when the social father became involved and the quality of the social fathers' relationship with the mother. As this phenomenon is becoming increasingly common, it will be important to better understand the specific ways social fathers influence children, as well as how it varies given the contextual factors of the relationship.

Co-parenting conflict. Co-parenting is defined as “the ways that parents work together in their role as parents” (Feinberg, 2002, p. 173). Feinberg includes other caretakers such as stepparents, grandparents, and social parents in this definition, and states that co-parenting is applicable in traditional and nontraditional families. The majority of the research on co-parenting includes White, middle-class, nuclear families (Feinberg, 2003).

Research has indicated the important link between the father and mother's relationship and the impact it has on parenting (see Fagan & Palkovitz, 2011; Feinberg, 2002, 2003). Both qualitative and quantitative studies have indicated the connection between the quality of the relationship between a father and the child's mother and his role as an engaged father (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Knox, Cowan, Pape Cowan, & Bildner, 2011). Research suggests that the quality of the father's relationship with the child's mother has both direct and indirect effects on the child and mother (Downey & Coyne, 1990; Flouri, 2005).

Carlson, McLanahan, and Brooks-Gunn (2008) found that positive co-parenting strongly predicted father involvement, amongst nonresident fathers. In families where the mother had more trust and better communication with the father, he was more likely to be involved. As this study involved secondary data and only included mother's reports of father involvement, the results may not tell the full story. It is possible that mothers are limiting involvement with fathers when they do not trust his behavior with the child. The results would be strengthened if father report of engagement and involvement were also included.

Understanding the microsystem factors which impact fathering is essential for increasing knowledge about fathers. This knowledge base related to the father, child and co-parental relationship is growing, but remains understudied and in need of further attention. In order to further understand fathers, it is equally important to understand the macrosystem in which fathering occurs.

Context: Macrosystem level of fathering. In Bronfenbrenner's framework, the macrosystem includes broad social influences, such as cultural expectations, economic status and social policies. By examining some of the macrosystem level issues related to fathering, such as poverty, race, and incarceration, a more complete picture of discrimination and challenge is gained. Through examining the macrosystem, the relevance of culture and subculture becomes apparent.

Poverty. More research exists concerning the impact of poverty on married fathers and single mothers. Much less is known concerning poverty's impact on nonmarried fathers. Few studies explore the relationship between substandard parenting and socioeconomic factors (Berger, 2007), although living in poverty is widely considered a risk factor for abuse (Guterman & Lee, 2005; National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, 2011). Berger (2007)

conducted a study using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth's (NLSY) Geographic Micro-Data file and Child and Young Adult file, which included 25,622 child-wave observations. Results indicate that income is protective, especially in mother-partner families; problematic parenting decreases when income rises. While the number of observations is impressive, the sample consists of children who were living with their biological mothers, leaving unknown results of children who primarily reside with their fathers. Poverty is also believed to impact parents' mental health, which can then impact their interactions with their children (Magnuson & Duncan, 2002). Living in poverty can increase the stressors a parent is dealing with and lead to feelings of anxiety and depression, which impacts the way a parent interprets their child's behavior and relates with them. Additionally, it is likely that children pick up on the stress and strain their parents are experiencing, which can impact their own mental health.

Dubowitz, Lane, Greif, Jensen and Lamb (2006), conducted a study with 19 low-income African American men. They utilized focus groups to better understand father's involvement in the lives of their children. Many of the results were similar to those for White, middle class fathers, including commitment to one's children and a desire to be involved. There were notable differences including the challenges of poverty and violence in neighborhoods, as well as the challenge of living apart from their child and lacking positive role models for fathering, as many of their own fathers had been uninvolved in their lives (Dubowitz et al, 2006). When fathers have received good fathering, they generally try to repeat it with their own children; when their own experience of being fathered was negative, they often try to compensate to provide their children a more positive experience (Snarey, 1993).

There are several significant barriers for fathers living in poverty, including racism, the job market, unsafe neighborhoods, living apart from their children, not having a role model for the fathering relationship and incarceration. Racism and oppression make it difficult for young men of color to get and maintain a job. The recession of 2008 to 2010 has been problematic for young uneducated men (Smeeding, Garfinkel, & Mincy, 2011). Those with less education and job training have been especially troubled by both unemployment and underemployment. Many families experiencing poverty are working families (Magnuson & Duncan, 2002). The lack of adequate income resulting from inadequate wages can create additional stress as well as less financial resources to support children.

Income is negatively correlated with levels of hostile parenting and physical discipline; as income declines, problems with hostility worsened (Slack, Holl, McDaniel, Yoo, & Bolger, 2004). Poverty may indirectly alter parenting as economic challenges may lead to greater parenting stress which may then result in harsher parenting (McLeod & Shanahan, 1993). Poverty and parenting have been consistently correlated in research studies; children raised in poverty experience greater risks from birth through the teenage years (Magnuson & Duncan, 2002). These risks include lower birth weight, higher risk of emotional and behavioral problems, increased risk of teen pregnancy, and higher incidence of child abuse and neglect.

Job loss and economic strain have been found to have a negative impact on the mental health of married, coresidential fathers. Additionally, these fathers had increased hostility in the co-parenting relationship (Brody, Stoneman, Flor, McCrary, Hastings, & Conyers, 1994). These problems related to mental health and co-parenting are believed to compromise the father's relationships and interactions with his children (Conger et al., 1993). These studies focused on married, co-resident fathers, again unmarried, noncustodial fathers have not been included in the

majority of the research. Though limited, some newer research is beginning to consider the experiences of low-income fathers.

Forste, Bartkowski and Jackson (2009) conducted a qualitative study with single, low-income men. They interviewed 36 men, 53% were Caucasian, 19% were African American, 11% were Hispanic, the remaining 16% were Native American or of mixed race and ethnic background. The fathers ranged in age from 20-39. While the article states it involves single men, the majority of the men were either married or cohabitating at the time of the study, though all had fathered children outside of marriage. Results suggest that men who were not close to their own fathers while growing up tended to define their role as that of a breadwinner. The fathers who were close to their own father as a child, tended to focus on involvement in their child's life, emotional support and the nurturing role, while still acknowledging importance of the breadwinner role. Within this subgroup of fathers differences exist, particularly based on childhood experiences and the context of father involvement in their own life, which influence their current perceptions of fathering. It is important to understand how one's childhood experiences may influence current parenting practices as this could influence the way caseworkers and other service providers engage with fathers and recognize their differential needs.

Fathers who are low-income face multiple challenges. Living in poverty is linked with multiple problems for the father, child, and the parental relationship. Poverty leads to additional stressors, and is associated with adverse mental health for fathers. Children raised in poverty are at higher risk for emotional and behavioral problems. Finally, fathers experiencing poverty are more likely to have hostile co-parenting relationships, with repercussions for both mothers and children.

Race and ethnicity. The majority of the research on fathers is focused on those who are middle class or Caucasian (Gadsden & Smith, 1995). Less focus has been placed on those of other races, such as African American or Hispanic. The literature examining differences in fathering between fathers of different races finds both similarities and differences. Similarities are found in fathers' desire to be involved and care for their children. Differences exist regarding rates of fathers who reside with their children, family structure, and levels of poverty. The rates of children who live with both parents differ significantly based on their race; it is estimated that 39% of Black children, 65% of Hispanic children, and 77% of White children under the age of 18 reside with both parents (Mincy, 2006).

Race is a significant factor in poverty; African American and Hispanic children are more likely to live in poverty than are European American children (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010). The inability of fathers to provide financially may lead to role strain and vulnerability to distress (Bowman, 1993). Minority parents are often faced with additional stressors, such as racism and poverty which may inhibit their effectiveness as parents; however, research suggests that in many instances they are providing nurturance, regardless of these barriers.

Minority fathers may be more involved with their children than commonly believed (Danziger & Radin, 1990); furthermore, research indicates African American fathers provide warmth and support to their children, regardless of socioeconomic status (McAdoo, 1981; Bowman, 1993). Smith, Krohn, Chu and Best (2005) examined a subset of data from the Rochester Youth Development Study focused on young men who became fathers before age 22. Data examining differences among non-resident African American, Hispanic and Caucasian fathers was analyzed. Results indicate similar levels of involvement; 61.8% of African American fathers, 54.3% of Hispanic fathers and 67.7% of Caucasian fathers had weekly

physical contact with their oldest child. A limitation of this study is the smaller proportion of Hispanic (20.7%) and White (11.9%) fathers who were included in analysis. Replication with larger proportions of Hispanic, and Caucasian fathers would increase confidence in these findings.

A study of at-risk male youth living in New York City examined the importance of male relatives in their lives (Richardson, 2009). The qualitative study included 15 African American males and their single mothers over a period of four years. Results indicate that African American uncles and other male relatives can provide a positive impact on adolescent male development and provide informal social controls on delinquency and violence. This study suggests that the roles of male relatives beyond the father are important considerations within African American families.

Race and ethnicity are factors which must be considered when examining fathering. Differences have been found for various racial groups regarding family composition and rates of poverty. Discrimination can impact education and employment, which are factors in a family's economic stability. It is possible that there are differences in extended family support in families of different races. It may be necessary for researchers to broaden their definitions regarding fathering and begin to consider both non-traditional and informal fathering, as research suggests these may be salient for African American families in particular.

Incarceration. In 2007, 52% of state prisoners and 63% of federal prisoners were parents of children under age 18. (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010). Average sentence lengths range from six to nine years, depending on whether one is in state or federal custody (Mumola, 2000). Glaze and Marushak report that 42% of imprisoned parents report being visited by their child since incarceration. The issue of contact and involvement while incarcerated is further

complicated when prisoners are placed in prisons a significant distance from children, making visitation much more difficult. Thus, even when imprisoned fathers desire contact and involvement in their children's lives, lack of proximity may inhibit this.

High levels of incarceration are notable for African American men. Smeeding, Garfinkel, & Mincy (2011) estimate that more than 20% of young fathers will be imprisoned by the time they are 30, and if they are Black, the rate is even higher. 25% of Black children and 4% of White children born in 1990 will have an incarcerated father by the time they are 14 years old (Wildeman, 2009). Once released, these men often have significant issues with finding a job, given their criminal history. Given that they are unable to earn money while in prison and then have difficulty securing employment after release, their ability to provide for their children is compromised. Their interaction and ability to nurture their children is clearly impacted by their time in prison.

Broader context. The third area of consideration within Belsky's model looks at larger societal factors impacting child maltreatment. These issues function at the cultural or societal level and impact families and individuals. The broader context of the developmental ecological model includes employment, community and social support, and cultural influences.

Employment and earnings. Berger (2004) conducted research on family income and risk of maltreatment. Data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth was utilized, which includes 17,871 observations of children between birth and nine years old and their families. The study found that children from low-income families were at greater risk for child maltreatment. Furthermore, results indicated that income impacted the quality of the caregiving environment, as well as receipt of routine medical and dental care. The data used in this study comprises a large sample size and is longitudinal, which are strengths. The data includes

observations from 1986-1998, which may no longer be representative. The data also includes only those children under age ten and excludes families with older children. Furthermore, the data is focused on children and mothers and provides minimal information on fathers, thus limiting the information included in the model.

Community and social support. Research dating back to the 1970's (Gil, 1975) indicated that those who engage in child abuse tend to lack social support and be isolated from others. Social support is thought to be important for reducing stress levels, receiving help in caring for children, and increasing the likelihood of adding to one's parenting repertoire (Milner & Chilamkurti, 1991). Studies have repeatedly found links between neighborhood socioeconomic factors and maltreatment rates in various states including Ohio (Coulton, Korbin, Su & Chow, 1995), Maryland (Ernst, 2001; Zuravin, 1989), Missouri (Drake & Pandey, 1996) and Nebraska (Garbarino & Crouter, 1978). In neighborhoods with lower socioeconomic conditions, maltreatment rates were higher.

Cultural influences. Within the United States, violence rates are extremely high, although they appear to be declining in recent years (Fischer, 2010). In 2006, 33,000 individuals committed suicide and 18,573 people died from homicide (CDC, 2008). Violence includes such acts as suicide, homicide, IPV, sexual violence, and youth violence. 94% of parents of toddlers and 35% of parents of infants have reported using corporal punishment within the preceding year (Straus & Stewart, 1999). Within society, high levels of violence have become normative.

The fathering literature has begun to pay more attention to fathers and the contexts impacting them. Gaps continue to exist regarding subtypes of fathers where less is known. One of these groups is fathers who have maltreated a child. Enhancing knowledge of fathering and maltreatment is a significant issue for both children and families.

Child Maltreatment

Child maltreatment is a problem affecting millions of children and their families. In the United States, more than one million cases of child maltreatment are substantiated each year (Bottoms & Quas, 2006). Child maltreatment encompasses physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. While each type of maltreatment is important for study, this chapter will limit its focus to physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect exclusively. Child abuse is perpetrated by all races, genders, and socioeconomic groups (Barclay, 1993). Biological fathers and social fathers are overrepresented as perpetrators of physical child abuse, particularly in the most severe cases (Margolin, 1992; Sinal et al., 2000).

Fathers and Maltreatment

The literature related to fathers and child physical abuse and neglect is lacking (Guterman & Lee, 2005; Lee, Bellamy & Guterman, 2009; Risley-Curtiss & Heffernan, 2003; Strega, Brown, Callahan, Dominelli, & Walmsley, 2009). High quality research on fathers in child welfare is limited, although this trend appears to be shifting. The child welfare literature has typically viewed fathers as absent/uninvolved, unimportant or dangerous (Bellamy, 2009). It has tended to look at unidirectional factors, with less emphasis on context. There are several reasons for this lack of attention, including education, lack of training and skills on working with fathers, and a lens which at times ignores risks and assets of fathers.

Fathers are generally not mentioned in social work texts and theories studied in social work courses were generally not developed or inclusive of men (Brown et al., 2009; Clapton, 2009). Several popular theories utilized in social work education, including Bowlby's work on attachment and Maslow's work on hierarchy of needs, view mothers as responsible for the welfare of children (Clapton, 2009). Thus, commonly taught theories have a core focus on

women as caretakers, without regard for father's ability or interest in caring for their children. The theories in use have not kept pace with the changing roles of fathers today. Furthermore texts used in social work, tend to focus more on women and mothers, with fewer examples including fathers (Clapton, 2009) and are frequently gender-biased (Risley-Curtiss & Heffernan, 2003).

In general, Child Protective Services (CPS) workers are not trained or expected to work with fathers. Most families who are involved with CPS have either a biological father, male relative or social father involved in their lives (Bellamy, 2009). Given the range of family composition, it is important for CPS workers to include other men who are significant in the lives of mothers and children (Berger et al., 2009). Inclusion of social fathers allows for a consideration of important figures in a family's life and allows workers to assess the possible risks and resources they present. In some instances, workers view involvement of fathers and social fathers as doubling an already overburdened caseload (Brown et al., 2009). Yet, excluding them from assessment and services presents a limited view of children's safety and well-being. Learning more about effective ways to engage fathers in services and finding effective ways to include them in services are necessary (Bellamy, 2009).

CPS efforts may focus on removing "unsafe" men from the family, rather than involve fathers and provide services to increase their abilities and skills. This approach neglects the reality that many men go on to have children with other women, which is consistent with the current high levels of multipartnered fertility (MPF) (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006). The failure to include fathers in child protection work ignores potential risks and assets of fathers (Brown, Callahan, Strega, Walmsley, & Dominelli, 2009). Poor men in today's society are often

marginalized, which is often repeated by the CPS system which ignores them (Risley-Curtiss & Heffernan, 2003).

Effects of Maltreatment

The effects of child abuse include physical injuries, cognitive deficits, socioemotional and behavioral problems (Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 1997; Widom, 2000). Researchers have found short and long term effects on the wellbeing of children who have experienced child abuse or neglect. Child abuse impacts a child's psychological, educational and behavioral welfare. According to Widom (2000), psychological effects include low self-esteem, depression and suicide attempts; cognitive consequences include problems with attention and poor school focus; and behavioral effects include physical aggression, violent behavior and poor social skills. Children who are abused often lack resources for managing their own frustration, stress and anger. The implications of this lack of self-control are that they may vent their anger on others, resulting in increased violence for society as a whole. Longer-term effects include children who were abused later repeating the abuse and neglect with their own children. Research has also indicated a link between parental verbal aggression and children's psychosocial problems (Moore & Pepler, 2006), even when no physical abuse is present.

Studies suggest that children who experience physical abuse have an increased risk of conduct disorders, depression, suicide attempts and antisocial behaviors (Kolko, 2002), impaired social competence (Azar et al, 1988), aggression and anxiety (Azar & Wolfe, 1988) as well as increased risk of severe injury or death (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). The effects of child neglect include academic problems, aggression and low self-esteem (Ericson & Egeland, 2002), as well as anxious and inattentive behaviors at school (Corcoran, 2000). The potential consequences of child maltreatment are serious and often long lasting. The focus of

parent intervention is to decrease or eliminate child maltreatment and enhance parenting skills in order to improve health and functioning of all family members. Christoffersen and DePanfillis (2009) found that a child's well-being improved when parental maltreatment was reduced.

Risk Factors

There has been an emphasis in the literature to identify factors that place a parent at higher risk of abusing so that professionals can intervene in order to prevent abuse from occurring (Ethier, Couture, & Lacharité, 2004; Lee, Guterman, & Lee, 2008). Some of the factors that are generally considered to place one at high risk include social isolation, poverty, stress, limited knowledge of child development or inappropriate parenting expectations, young maternal age, parental depression, and substance abuse (Daro & Cohn-Donnelly, 2001; Edwards & Lutzker, 2008; Fantuzzo, Stevenson, Abdul, Kabir, & Perry, 2007; Schaeffer, Alexander, Bethke & Kretz, 2005).

Child abuse effects children in terms of their emotional, physical and social well-being and has consequences that can last a lifetime. Some of the specific consequences identified for children who have been abused include aggression, depression, delinquency, developmental delays (Herschell & McNeil, 2005; Skowron & Reinemann, 2005), as well as replication of the cycle of abuse with their own children.

Black, Heyman and Slep (2001) conducted a study reviewing the risk and protective factors for occurrence of child physical abuse. The article discusses risk factors for parents, but the majority of the studies reviewed included a primary or exclusive focus on mothers. Risk factors include a history of being abused in the parent's own youth, being a young parent, alcohol use in fathers, and living in poverty and/or a neighborhood with fewer two parent families (Black, Heyman, & Slep, 2001). Black, Slep, and Heyman (2001) also looked at risk

factors for psychological abuse. Parents who were more aggressive, neurotic, had very low income and domestic violence between parents were all risk factors, as were the parents own experience of being yelled at and perceiving their father as less caring while growing up (Black, Slep, & Heyman). Concerns with this study include the range of definitions used when studying psychological abuse. The lack of consensus regarding definitions and lack of standardized measures limits the conclusions that can be drawn. As the study primarily included mothers, generalizations to fathers are limited.

Intervention Research on Fathers and Maltreatment

The vast majority of research concerning interventions for maltreating parents includes only mothers (Crooks, Scott, Francis, Kelly, & Reid, 2006). There exists a notable lack of research and curricula on fathers involved with child welfare (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erikson, 1998). In many cases a study implies that both mothers and fathers are included, through use of the term ‘parents’ but when closely examined, the study involves a primary or exclusive focus on mothers. In some cases, studies originally contained a small number of men, but due to the small size, they were dropped from analysis.

It is also important to gain more father participation in studies. While many mothers are single parents, there are many fathers who play a role in parenting. A majority of parent intervention programs are not designed exclusively for mothers; they are generally targeted at parents of either sex. Parent training programs designed for maltreating parents may not meet the needs of father’s who have abused a child (Crooks, Scott, Francis, Kelly, & Reid, 2006). Given that father’s generally play a smaller role in caretaking activities, it is also possible that programs may not be starting where the father is, and are therefore less effective. It is important to find out if programs that work for mothers are also effective with fathers.

Some interventions which have included and analyzed data for both mothers and fathers have found differential levels of effectiveness. The Triple P-Positive Parenting Program is an evidence-based program for parents to address child behavior problems and is based on social learning principles. A recent meta-analysis examined the impact of the program on fathers' parenting (Fletcher, Freeman, & Matthey, 2011). Of the total sample of participants, 20% were fathers. The study involved 37 treatment groups, which were delivered as Group Triple P (n=14), Standard Triple P (n=6), Enhanced Triple P (n=5), and Self-Directed Triple P (n=5), Stepping Stones Triple P (n=4), Primary Care Triple P (n=2), and Pathways Triple P (n=1). Results indicated that Triple P was more effective at improving the parenting practices of mother's than fathers. One format which is targeted to parents of children with a disability, Stepping Stones Triple P, did produce large positive changes in father's parenting practices. Further replication is necessary to confirm these results and better understand the reasons that this format appears more effective for fathers.

Interventions for child maltreatment have largely been tested on "parents," which in actuality often means mothers. More focused research is needed in order to understand if existing interventions are effective for fathers. Intervention studies that examine outcomes for fathers are one important area where more work is needed. Unfortunately, this is not the only area where work is needed; expanding the focus on fathering and maltreatment is necessary in order to improve fathering practices and child well-being.

Conclusions

Research needs to focus more on father perspectives and extend the scope beyond father involvement, which is where much of the limited fathering literature is focused. While the field of fathering must remain open to variability within and among fathers, it is important to develop and test theories that are specific to fathering, which may provide a greater and more nuanced understanding of this population. By increasing our knowledge base concerning the needs, strengths and uniqueness of fathers, we increase our ability to design appropriate and effective interventions to meet their needs. By assuming all types of fathering are the same, we do an injustice to variation within different cultures. It is important to acknowledge similarities and differences, to pay attention to uniqueness among cultures and how distinctive qualities of various cultural groups may impact the relationship and the development of the child.

By assuming that all programs that work for mothers will work for fathers, we are making a huge leap and potentially providing ineffective services, which do a disservice to fathers and children. It is important to study fathers so that we better understand the specific risk and protective factors that apply. For fathers who have maltreated a child, much of the focus has been on their risks, impairments, and danger to their children. While these factors must be considered, it is essential that their strengths and resources are considered as well.

Before we can offer services that are based on the needs and strengths of men and that are both engaging and targeted at the needs of these fathers, we need to know much more about these fathers. It is not enough to understand the number of fathers, how often they see their children, and whether they pay child support; we need to better grasp their view of their role, how they hope to father, and their challenges.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of maltreating fathers for both researchers and practitioners, with the ultimate aim of helping families. As the literature in this area is limited, it was important to look closely at maltreating fathers' roles, behaviors, and attitudes. The etiology of child maltreatment is understood to be multifaceted, thus it was important to consider a multiplicity of factors which may relate to the abuse or neglect. Furthermore, the context in which fathering occurs is a significant factor which is often overlooked. Researchers must understand when fathering is compromised and when fathering is strengthened. There may be untapped strengths of fathers or certain conditions when maltreatment is less likely to occur. It is imperative that these factors are recognized in order to increase the safety and well-being of children. The objective of the study was to better understand the needs and strengths of fathers who have abused or neglected their child, as well as the ways context, attitudes, temperament and goodness of fit impact their parenting relationship. The research questions posed were: 1. What are the attitudes, behaviors and contexts of fathers who have abused or neglected a child that relate to maltreatment? 2. What are the resources and capacities of these fathers which could be capitalized on? 3. How does goodness-of-fit or a poor fit between the father and child impact the parenting relationships of

these fathers? Better understanding of fathers who have maltreated a child was undertaken using a traditional grounded theory methodology. The study was situated in a functionalist paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

The Functionalist perspective is set in both the objective and the regulation. “It is characterized by a concern for providing explanations of the status quo, social order, consensus, social integration, solidarity, need satisfaction and actuality” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 26). This paradigm does not focus on radical change, helping society emancipate. It is concerned with regulating human functioning as it is.

The functionalist paradigm assumes a realist ontology, where “the social world has an existence which is as hard and concrete as the natural world” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 4). From this perspective, one does not create the social world, it is already there. The functionalist paradigm assumes a positivist epistemology. From this viewpoint, one attempts to explain and predict. It is a causal approach. The functionalist perspective takes a determinist view of human nature. This perspective views “man and his activities as being completely determined by the situation or ‘environment’ in which he is located” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 6). The Functionalist perspective is nomothetic, with “emphasis on the importance of basing research upon systematic protocol and technique” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 6). Importance is placed on systematic procedures and scientific rigor. Positivist research designs such as the type of grounded theory used for this research fit within this paradigm.

Method

This chapter will explain a brief background of grounded theory, and then will describe the specific type of grounded theory chosen for this study. Finally, this chapter will outline the specific methodology that was followed in order to best answer the questions.

Historical and theoretical base of Grounded Theory. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss are the founders of grounded theory, which was introduced in 1967 with their publication on the topic. Glaser and Strauss began their collaboration on a research project focused on dying in hospitals. They worked together to develop the method of grounded theory as a way to generate theory grounded in empirical data (Walker & Myrick, 2006). They continued to utilize and develop grounded theory (GT) until the 1990's, when their differing perspectives on grounded theory methods resulted in a split in approaches. The approach Glaser espoused is generally termed either Glaserian grounded theory or a classic grounded theory approach. Strauss continued his work in collaboration with Corbin, in what is variously referred to as evolved grounded theory or traditional grounded theory. Glaser (1992) termed Strauss and Corbin's reformulation of grounded theory as 'full conceptual description.' Glaser felt that the reformulated version strayed from its original methods and intent and he considered it a new method.

There are methodological differences in the two approaches. Strauss and Corbin (1990) provide more details and structure in their approach to coding as well as advocate use of specific analytic strategies such as the "conditional matrix." Other researchers have developed variations on grounded theory, some of which are located in different paradigms with differing assumptions, including Charmaz (2006) and Clarke (2005). Heath and Cowley (2004) state the goal with grounded theory is to develop a theory that improves understanding and action of the

phenomena as well as “explore basic social processes *and* to understand the multiplicity of interactions that produces variation in that process” (p. 142). Depending on the type of grounded theory chosen by a researcher, there are differences in its enactment, including the coding process and tools used.

Glaser and Strauss provided different recommendations regarding the amount and type of reading the researcher should engage in prior to commencing a study. Glaser recommended that the researcher limit reading to the general topic area and that the researcher read widely, while Strauss recommended use of self and the literature to heighten theoretical sensitivity (Heath & Cowley, 2004). The Strauss and Corbin approach acknowledges that researchers have prior knowledge on the topic of study and that reading the literature prior to the study is acceptable, but that an exhaustive knowledge of the literature is not necessary (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Knowledge of the literature allows the researcher to increase sensitivity to subtle distinctions in data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). A researcher’s prior experiences and reading of the literature provides a basis upon which comparisons can be made. This approach overtly acknowledges that some of the relevant concepts are not yet known. Without the expectation for having exhaustive knowledge for the relevant literature, researchers are hopefully more open to hearing what the data have to say, as the goal is for new concepts or relationships between concepts to be revealed throughout the research process. A grounded theory “is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). The goal of a grounded theory is to build a theory which proposes relationships between concepts, sheds light on a phenomenon and can eventually be used to guide action. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Justification for Grounded Theory research. Grounded theory methodology was the best approach for this study because relatively little is known about fathers and maltreatment. Particularly little is known from fathers' perspectives and words. By conducting a grounded theory study, it was hoped to learn more from fathers, in their own words, regarding their needs, strengths, and beliefs about fatherhood. As less is understood about this particular group of fathers, there were two primary reasons for pursuing this line of inquiry. The first is that increasing the knowledge base will enhance our ability to assess and treat fathers who have maltreated a child. Secondly, when a lack of understanding of maltreating fathers exists, there are serious consequences for their children in terms of their physical and emotional well-being. Grounded theory allows for the exploration of father's attitudes, behaviors and contexts using multiple sources of data to contribute to an in-depth understanding.

Selection of Grounded Theory method. I chose the traditional grounded theory approach (TGT; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) for this study. "A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). This approach provides structure while allowing for the data to inform the resulting theory which is developed towards practice. As one of the goals of this research study was to provide increased knowledge for researchers and practitioners, it is important that the end is increased knowledge and guidance for future practice.

The purpose of utilizing this design was to allow for a rich understanding of these fathers and hopefully provide information which can be used in prevention and intervention efforts in the future. The focus of this dissertation was generation of a testable theory related to fathers who have abused or neglected a child. This was warranted given the limited information available, which is particularly true for low-income fathers, nonresidential fathers, and social

fathers. Researchers using grounded theory believe that “theories should be ‘grounded’ in data from the field, especially in the actions, interactions, and social processes of people” (Creswell, 2013).

Following TGT methodology, open, axial and selective coding were utilized to help develop the concepts and their dimensions and properties. A continual process of interviewing and coding continued until saturation was achieved. The purpose of this study was to develop a set of interrelated concepts and identify their relationships in order to explain the phenomenon of fathering and maltreatment.

Feasibility

In this mid-Atlantic region, there is a primary provider of services to parents who have maltreated a child. Much of my own practice background has focused on child maltreatment and I worked at this agency prior to beginning this study, thus I have a professional relationship with the executive director (ED). The ED has been receptive to this research project since the idea was broached and was willing to assist in the process. Her role in access was to inform the parent group facilitators and intake staff of this study and encourage them to participate. The facilitators and intake staff at Greater Richmond Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN) were asked to allow me to attend parenting groups to read the recruitment script to clients and to collect consent to contact forms from potential participants. Additionally, intake staff was asked to let new fathers know about the study and share the recruitment handout. One staff member at SCAN contacted all fathers who had completed group within the last year. The ED communicated to facilitators that they were not obligated to let me attend groups, but asked for the assistance of those who were willing. All of the facilitators were receptive to me attending

group to share recruitment materials. There would have been no consequence for choosing not to participate and this was made clear to facilitators. Facilitators were not informed whether fathers chose to participate or not.

Sampling and Recruitment of Study Participants

Sample. Corbin and Strauss (1990) advocate using a theoretical sampling strategy which involves sampling based on concepts that are repeatedly present or notably absent in interviews, yet they also state that researchers need to be practical and may only be able to collect data for a restricted period of time. While the goal was to reach saturation, meaning that new data is no longer emerging and the concepts are well defined (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), this was not completely possible. This study used maximum variation sampling which was described by Patton (1990) as a purposeful strategy of selecting a sample of great diversity that aims at “capturing and describing the central themes or principal outcomes that cut across a great deal of participant or program variation” (p. 172). This was important because when there is significant variation in the sample, common patterns that emerge in the data are of worthy of attention. Maximum variation sampling is a modification for feasibility and to respect privacy of participants. The goal was to conduct 20-30 in depth one-on-one interviews from the sample of fathers that are currently enrolled or have recently completed a Greater Richmond SCAN parenting group. Padgett (2008) suggests interviewing between 20-30 persons in a grounded theory study, but acknowledges that sample sizes may be smaller or larger. I interviewed 15 fathers and achieved a good amount of variability in terms of age at which the men had their first child, the numbers of children they have, and their income levels, along with other important variables. I had maximum variation sufficient for grounding and found a good deal of saturation.

The goal was to interview enough fathers until saturation is achieved; however, it was believed that recruiting participants who have abused or neglected a child or were considered high risk would be difficult. This researcher participated in another study with SCAN parents and despite an extensive recruitment process, five parents agreed to participate, but only one actually participated. While there were important differences between the two studies, it was acknowledged that recruiting fathers could be extremely difficult. The fathers who participated in this study were all referred to SCAN due to a substantiated maltreatment incident or were engaged in custody issues serious enough that the judge sent them for parenting intervention. These fathers were either recruited at intake, enrolled in group or had completed treatment at SCAN. These fathers were in a position to help researchers generate theories regarding their needs and strengths, thus indirectly improving treatment interventions for this population. Efforts were made to recruit a full range of fathers, through a variety of methods.

SCAN employs a variety of groups to meet the needs of various parents in the Richmond area. Those attending groups include adults age 18 and older. It includes mothers and fathers who have either: substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect; are considered high risk for abuse or neglect; or are self-referred due to wanting more parenting information. Individuals eligible to attend SCAN must be in a parenting role to one or more children, from infant through age 17.

The majority of their groups are 20-week treatment groups for parents who are court ordered or strongly encouraged to attend parenting groups by their Department of Social Services worker or the court system. These groups include parenting education but also focus on the parents' childhood history, their exposure to trauma, and taking responsibility for the incident that harmed their child. Other groups include a Nurturing Parent Group which is for parents with a less serious allegation, and/or fewer risk factors such as trauma history, mental health or

substance abuse concerns. Groups typically enroll 12-16 parents, and due to attrition typically finish with 7-8 parents. Groups contain men and women of all races and socioeconomic status. In general, groups tend to contain more women, African Americans and those with a lower socio-economic status. For this study, any father who enrolled in a SCAN treatment group who had one or more children (biological, adoptive, step or social) was eligible for inclusion. Fathers needed to speak and read English. Maximum variation sampling was used in order to include a range of fathering subtypes (e.g., biological and social, resident and non-resident).

Maximum variation sampling. Use of maximum variation sampling allowed the researcher to interview “individuals who cover the spectrum of positions and perspectives in relation to the phenomenon one is studying” (Palys, 2008). The sample for this study was drawn from all of the treatment groups at SCAN. This was done in order to reach fathers who have been involved in a maltreatment incident with one or more children or considered high risk and to capture variation in degree of the maltreatment incident and parental risk factors. Initial dimensions for sampling included family structure (biological, adoptive, social and step father), income, race/ethnicity, and age. The focus was to interview fathers along a range of each dimension so that their perspectives were explored and captured.

Recruitment. Potential fathers were reached in one of three ways, either at intake, during the group process, or after completion of the group. Staff members who conducted an intake assessment with a father provided him with information about the study and a consent to contact form. This researcher attended all eight active groups and shared recruitment information with fathers as well as a consent to contact form. Fathers who had completed a 20-week parenting group within the last year were contacted by phone by a SCAN staff person to inform them of the study and provide information. This three-tiered strategy was utilized in order to reach as

many fathers as possible and in an effort to reach fathers at differing phases of the treatment process.

Of those who completed interviews, two were recruited at intake, eight were current group members, and five had completed group. In some cases, it took multiple appointments to complete the interview. Several fathers missed the first appointment, which was rescheduled and completed at the second appointment. One father had five different appointments, where he either rescheduled or did not attend before he met the researcher and completed the interview.

Description of the sample. Fifteen fathers participated in this study. The demographic information for the participants is presented in Table 3.1. All of the fathers reside in the greater Richmond area. They range in age from 27 to 46, with a mean age of 35.9. The participants had their first child between the ages of 16 and 40, with a mean age of 22.7; see Table 3.2. Seven of the fathers are currently married, seven are single, and one is an unmarried partner. The fathers vary in the number of children they have, ranging from 1 to 12, with a mean of 4.3. Two fathers reported a certain number of children and later revealed a slightly different number; details are contained in table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Demographic Data							
Case Number	Current Age	Age at fatherhood	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Children	Marital Status	Number of Mothers ^a	Income
151	36	21	African American	4	Married	3	\$40,000
152	46	17	African American	7	Single	3	No Response
153	30	21	African American/Hispanic	5	Single	1	Unsure
154	46	40	Hispanic	4	Single	1	\$140,000
155	29	17	Caucasian	2	Single	2	\$90,000
156	28	18	African American	2	Unmarried Partners	2	\$18,000
157	27	24	Caucasian	1	Single	1	Unsure
158	35	27	African American	4	Married	3	\$75,000
159	34	16	African American	4	Married	2	\$98,000
160	42	28	Hispanic	7	Married	5	\$22,000
161	31	24	African American	3	Single	1	\$5,760
162	43	21	African American	4	Married	1	\$13,200
163	42	21	African American	3 ^b	Married	3	\$56,000
164	29	25	African American	3	Married	3	\$48,000
165	31	20	African American	12 ^c	Single	3	\$27,960
^a Number of mothers refers to the number of women the father has children with. ^b This father indicated that he had 3 children and later stated that he had another child he has not met. ^c This father indicated that he had 12 children. He later informed researcher that two of them were children with whom he had a social fathering relationship.							

Table 3.2 Age at Oldest Child's Birth		
Age Range	Count	Percentage of Sample
16-21	9	60.0
22-27	4	26.7
28-33	1	6.7
34-40	1	6.7

Annual household income ranged from less than \$6,000 to \$140,000. Three fathers were unsure or declined to respond to this question. Table 3.3 provides more detailed information regarding income. Regarding educational level achieved, 5 did not complete high school, 4 received a high school diploma or GED, 4 attended some college, 1 had an Associate's Degree, and 1 had a Bachelor's Degree.

Table 3.3		
Annual Household Income		
Range	Count	Percentage of Sample
≤\$10,000	1	6.7
\$10,001-\$15,000	1	6.7
\$15,001-\$25,000	2	13.3
\$25,001-\$50,000	3	20.0
\$50,001-\$75,000	2	13.3
\$75,001-\$100,000	2	13.3
\$100,001+	1	6.7
Unsure/Declined	3	20.0

Data Collection Strategy

Participants were asked to participate in a semi-structured interview which was expected to last approximately 90 minutes. Dimensions of the study will be discussed later. Field notes were taken during the interviews and extended field notes were written after each interview. Interviews were audiotaped for later review and clarification, to assure fidelity of the expanded field notes, but were not part of the analytic process as these tapes were not transcribed. The researcher also utilized memoing throughout the data collection process.

Data Collection

Demographics. The demographic form included information related to father's age, income, marital status, residential status, relationship to child, as well as his children's gender and age. See Appendix A for demographic form. These data were triangulated with data from the in-depth interview to give a fuller picture of the father and his child(ren). Data triangulation involves the use of multiple types of data, which for this project, included observations recorded in field notes, the in-depth interviews, and demographic form. Using more than one form of data allows for validating information for a deeper understanding and multiple perspectives to help enhance the explanation (Barusch, Gringeri, & George, 2011).

Qualitative interviews. An important aspect of this study was the opportunity to gain information and insight into fathers' perspectives from their own point of view. The focus was on asking potentially sensitive questions once rapport has been established in order to better understand each father's viewpoint. See Appendix B for interview protocol. The questions focused on the participant's experiences as a father, his relationship and involvement with his child, financial and in-kind contributions for the child, current or past incarceration, intimate partner violence, the strengths and challenges he identifies in his fathering and the goodness of fit in the relationship between the father and child. The dimensions remained the same in each interview, but in keeping with the grounded theory process, probes did change.

It should be noted that the initial interview questions tended to be more open ended, becoming more focused as the research process progressed (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Questions asked in later stages of the process were informed by previous interviews; thus, the researcher attempted to flesh out those concepts and their dimensions which previous participants had

discussed. In a grounded theory study, interview questions are intentionally broad, allowing the researcher some leeway and flexibility for exploring the issue in depth from the point of view of the participants (Backman & Kyngäs, 1999).

Dimensions of the Study

Previous review of the literature indicated several conceptual areas of inquiry. These were used for initial inquiry with fathers/participants as they were broad, yet relevant to the topic area. The idea was to have a focus for inquiry without restricting the emergence of theoretical propositions. Subsequent interviews utilized probes based on analysis of initial interviews to allow emergent areas of inquiry to be followed. The broad areas included:

- Strengths of fathers. These included their prior experiences, education, and relationships which may impact their parenting and influence their resilience and relationships with their children.
- Challenges and needs of fathers. These included any mental health issues, substance abuse either currently or historically, if they were young fathers, or had experienced incarceration.
- Contexts of fathering. The primary areas for consideration included poverty, family structure, family size and relationship with child's mother.
- Attitudes and Behaviors of fathers. This included the beliefs a father has regarding children and parenting, their actions toward their children including playing, caretaking and physical discipline.

Data Analysis

This study involved interviews with fathers enrolled in a treatment parenting group either for child maltreatment or custody issues serious enough for a judge to order them to SCAN. This project used traditional grounded theory analytic procedures involving constant comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The interviews were all audio recorded to allow the researcher to review the interview for clarity. Strauss and Corbin (1990) recommend listening to the audio recordings to enhance analysis. The researcher took notes during the actual interviews and then expanded the notes within 24 hours (Rodwell, 1998), while the information was fresh. These expanded field notes formed the basis for analysis. Grounded theory analysis involves thematic analysis from one interview to the next and a formal lumping and sorting process of constant comparison when all data are collected. Important elements of constant comparative analysis include openness to new ideas, coding, memoing, sorting, and theory production.

Constant comparative analysis. In a grounded theory study, the researcher continuously thematically analyzes the data throughout the collection process, and then engages in formal analysis termed the constant comparative method. The process of constant comparison enables the researcher to compare units of data to each other in order to examine the properties and dimensions within the data, while ensuring that all data is analyzed, rather than prematurely disregarded (O'Connor, Netting, & Thomas, 2008). Thematic analysis allows for new ideas and threads to be followed in later interviews. The process of constantly comparing information looks for “differences and similarities across incidents within the data currently collected and provides guidelines for collecting additional data. Analysis explicitly compares each incident in the data with other incidents appearing to belong to the same category, exploring their similarities and differences” (Spiggle, 1994, p. 493). In a grounded theory study, constant

comparison is essential, and allows the researcher to observe whether the data support emerging categories (Holton, 2010). This technique allows the researcher to code the data by breaking it into smaller components, labeling the component pieces and then comparing pieces of data, cases, and codes in order to increase understanding (Sbaraini, Carter, Evans, & Blinkhorn, 2011). The researcher uses this process of comparison throughout the research process, as emerging findings from one interview guide inquiry in subsequent interviews.

Openness. The concept of openness is important because it conveys that the researcher must stay open to new ideas being conveyed and minimize preconceived notions. The reason for choosing grounded theory is that more exploration is needed to flesh out an area of inquiry. Thus, the researcher must remain open to new ideas, processes and the relationships between them. In this study, it was important that the researcher remained open to new ideas and possibilities raised by participants, without allowing previous literature reviews and professional experience to close off possibilities that fathers presented.

Coding. The primary data analysis process used in constant comparison is coding. Coding the data involves going beyond description and looking abstractly at the data to see what is there. A grounded theory approach involves “fragmenting the text into concepts and then putting it back together in larger theoretical categories” (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 270). The method developed by Strauss and Corbin provides systematic coding procedures called constant comparison where each unit of data is compared to all other units brought together under codes. The coding process allows the researcher to look at data in abstract form, looking for properties of concepts and similarities and differences. In this study, the researcher initially conducted a thematic analysis at the end of each interview to see if new probes were needed or existing

probes should be discarded. After all interviews were completed and saturation was achieved, the researcher engaged in the constant comparison method.

Open coding. This researcher wrote field notes during each interview which were expanded following the interview itself. The notes from interviews were reviewed and line by line analysis implemented in order to develop codes, first identifying units that stand alone, and bringing together similar units that can then be coded. In this study, the number of units for each participant interview ranged from 108 to 264, with an average of 186. Next steps involved constructing concepts and identifying the properties and dimensions of these concepts while comparing for similarities and differences amongst them (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The goal of this detailed analysis was to view and classify phenomena in a new way, to see possibilities that have not previously been explored. Throughout the process of open coding, Strauss and Corbin (1990) recommend the use of analytic tools including questioning, analyzing words, phrases and sentences. The purpose is to flesh out concepts and fully examine their dimensions and properties, called axial coding. Later in the coding process, the concepts were pulled together at a higher level of abstraction into core variables and categories.

Axial coding. Axial coding involves “the process of relating categories to their subcategories, termed ‘axial’ because coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 123). This phase of coding transpires while open coding is occurring and the researcher alternates between the two. This process helps the researcher by understanding the concepts to identify relationships between categories and subcategories, observing connections between properties and dimensions of a phenomenon. The subcategories answer questions about the phenomenon, such as when, where, why, who, how, and identifying the resulting consequences (Strauss &

Corbin, 1998). This process helps the researcher reveal relationships between categories, such as causal, associational, and subcategories and begins to explain the concepts and move to higher levels of abstraction.

Selective coding. Selective coding was utilized after potential core variables had been recognized. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), selective coding is the process of integrating and refining the categories which form the theory. It is also a means of data reduction that involves identification of the core or central category. It is necessary for the core category to be abstract and have explanatory power in that other main categories relate to it. The core category must have analytic power and also allow for variation within categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The core category should appear frequently in the data and help to theoretically explain the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The core category of the theory developed in this study is Acceptable Fathering. While different researchers with differing orientations may develop different core categories with the same data, when provided with an explanation of the process, the logic of how each researcher arrived at the core category should be apparent.

Rigor

In framing this study within the functionalist paradigm, issues of rigor and attempts to explain and predict were significant. The focus of rigor in this research was positivistic, guarding against subjectivity and moving as much as possible, to objectivity and accurate capturing of reality.

Memos. Memo writing is an important element in grounded theory. “Memos are theoretical notes about the data and the conceptual connections between categories” (Glaser & Holton, 2004). Memos are the written records which are the outcomes of analysis. Memoing

requires the researcher to write down ideas throughout the research process (Creswell, 2013) which capture the researcher's thinking and developing ideas throughout the project. Another purpose of memos is to track decisions made throughout the research process. The process of memoing helps the researcher make connections between categories and begin developing hypotheses. Memos can be used for multiple purposes, including identification of properties of concepts, asking questions about emerging data, and developing a storyline. Memos document the emergent design decisions and the researcher's analytic growth and decisions. Memos were written in paper or electronic form, depending on when and where the idea occurred. Electronic memos were printed to allow for hand sorting.

Sorting. Sorting of memos is a conceptual process based on theoretical codes. The process of sorting involves reviewing, separating and incorporation of the researcher's memos (Glaser & Holton, 2004). This process recombines the data which was previously fragmented. This process helps the researcher to make connections between concepts, develop a fully integrated, rich theory, and during this process, integrates the relevant literature into the theory. This researcher used a hand sorting technique, which Glaser (2005) recommends in order to remain "creatively conceptual" (p. 39). This involved using index cards containing memos and sorting the cards into piles.

Theory production. Grounded theory studies culminate in a working theory that relates the concepts to each other in a cohesive whole (Sbaraini, Carter, Evans, & Blinkhorn, 2011). As data is analyzed and theory is being built, the researcher looks for negative cases, those that do not confirm the model (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which allows for variation in the theory and the possible need to collect further data. All data, confirming and disconfirming is examined in the process of developing a grounded theory.

Reflexivity. Throughout this course of this research, differences are likely to exist between researcher and participants, including gender, race, education, socioeconomic and maltreatment status. A similarity between this researcher and the participants was the common ground of being parents. Padgett (2008) states that some researchers believe in the importance of matching the researcher and participant by various demographic characteristics such as age and race, while others believe that being a skillful interviewer is the paramount concern. The focus on matching is believed to increase participant comfort and willingness to discuss certain topics. However, one will never have all of the characteristics of the participants.

Efforts to address differences between the researcher and participants included the researcher's strong listening skills, sensitivity, empathy, and experience in interviewing. This researcher has also worked in the child maltreatment field for many years and is comfortable speaking with parents about challenges in parenting and incidents of maltreatment. However, it is important to realize the possibility that one may react subjectively to a participant's responses. Reflexivity is the ability to reflect on oneself and one's bias (Padgett, 2008). Reflective memos were written throughout the process in an attempt to increase awareness and minimize bias. Reflexivity is essential so that participants' stories can be heard and examined as objectively as possible. Additionally, the reflexive journal was used to record underlying assumptions about the participants, the problem, and the context (Rodwell, 1998), in an effort to bound subjectivity and move toward managing biases and approximate objectivity. The researcher maintained a handwritten reflexive journal in a notebook, which was updated as needed. The goal of the grounded theory study was to develop a theory that reflects the participants words and stories accurately, thus reflexivity is important to the process.

Peer reviewer. In an attempt to increase objectivity and ensure that researcher bias is minimized, a peer reviewer was utilized throughout this process. A peer reviewer offers support and questions assumptions the researcher makes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Marriette Klein, a recent PhD graduate, examined the coding strategy and developing theory to see if the process and findings were logical and grounded in the data. Dr. Klein is an individual with previous experience conducting qualitative research and has completed a grounded theory study herself. This researcher met with Dr. Klein one or two times per month to update her on the developing theory and the research progress. Corbin indicates the importance of credibility in the research process which indicates “findings are trustworthy and believable in that they reflect participants’, researchers’, and readers experiences with a phenomenon but at the same time the explanation is only one of many possible ‘plausible’ interpretations possible from the data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 302). The peer reviewer examined the coding strategy and memos to determine that the researcher’s coding appeared believable and made sense given the participant data and that decisions were congruent with the design and not made simply for convenience sake, and that researcher bias was appropriately managed. The development of concepts and the diagrams of the emerging theory were reviewed and found to be thorough and consistent.

Human Subjects Protections

The study went through the approval process from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Virginia Commonwealth University. This study posed no serious ethical problems in that the participants consented to participate, were not considered a special population, and anonymity was maintained by assigning numbers to individuals thus assuring confidentiality. Interviews with participants were conducted after obtaining informed consent in a place of their choosing, thus assuring privacy. Participants were informed of the study purpose and the aspects of their

involvement. Ethical standards of VCU and the professions of social work were upheld throughout the process. Before the interview process began, participants were clearly informed in writing and verbally that the researcher is a mandated reporter and therefore any suspected child abuse or neglect must be reported to the appropriate authorities.

Risk. Risk in this study was deemed low. It was noted that there was potential for some participants to become upset when discussing the subject matter, although this did not appear to be the case during interviews. Participants did not have to talk about any subject they did not want to talk about, and could end the interview at any time. Any participant who requested the names of counselors to contact were provided a resource sheet as well as those participants that the interviewer thought may find it helpful; two fathers were provided with this resource list.

Confidentiality protections. Participants were informed that potentially identifiable information about them consisted of interview notes, audiotapes of interviews, and the instruments they completed. Data were collected only for research purposes. The data were identified by ID numbers and pseudonyms, not names, and stored in a locked research area. In order to protect anonymity of participants, while allowing for differentiation between them, the ID number system (151-165) will be utilized in chapter 4 to indicate which participant a particular quote is referencing. All personal identifying information was kept in password protected files and these files will be deleted within 3 months of the end of the study. Notes from the study were kept in a locked file cabinet and will be destroyed three months after the study ends. The interviews were audio taped, and permission was given by participants, but no names were recorded. At the beginning of the interview session each individual had a number assigned so that no names were recorded. The tapes and the notes were stored in a locked cabinet. At the conclusion of the study, the tapes will be destroyed. The researcher did not

inform SCAN staff of who participated in the study. Participants were apprised that findings from this study may be presented at meetings or published in papers, but their name will not ever be used in these presentations or papers.

Participants were informed before the interview began that should they disclose that they may cause injury to themselves or others, or inform the researcher of any current suspected child abuse, it is required by law to report that information to the appropriate authorities.

Privacy. The interviews were held in a private location of the participants choosing to ensure privacy for participants. The researcher only asked questions which were pertinent to the current research study.

Participant costs and incentives. There were no anticipated costs to participants, other than their time. Participants were compensated for their time with a \$25 gift card. As interviews were expected to last 90 minutes, this amount was neither coercive nor excessive. Participants were also provided bus tickets if needed for them to travel to the agreed on location.

Product of Study

This study had one primary product, a substantive theory related to fathering and maltreatment. Grounded theory studies can produce two types of theories, either substantive or formal. Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe substantive theory as:

A set of well-developed categories (e.g. themes, concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some relevant social, psychological . . . or other phenomenon. The statements of relationship explain who, what, when, where, why, how, and with what consequences an event occurs (p. 22)

The difference between substantive and formal theory is that substantive theory could be derived from one study whereas formal theory would be developed from several grounded theory studies of the same topic or further testing of a substantive theory using other designs. The theory was developed from the data as a result of the interviews and data analysis procedures explained in this chapter. This research project aimed to develop a substantive theory related to fathering and maltreatment and is accompanied by a narrative explanation and justification of the theory. This research is building towards a testable theory and the theory produced here is the first step in the process.

Assessing Quality of the Study

In assessing quality of this study it is important to examine both elements of rigor in qualitative studies generally as well as criterion for judging quality in grounded theory studies specifically. Creswell (2007) identified eight strategies for establishing rigor in qualitative studies and recommended using a minimum of two strategies. The eight strategies he identified include: triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, persistent observation or prolonged engagement, reflexivity or use of self, thick description, negative case analysis, and external audit. Several of these strategies were used to enhance rigor within this project. Data triangulation was used by gathering multiple forms of data including interviews and a demographic form. Reflexivity occurred through the use of reflective memos. Thick description through the use of direct quotes was utilized as well to better understand the person and their context. Additionally, this study addressed rigor by utilizing semi structured interviews conducted by one researcher, using maximum variation in the selection of participants and pulled the theoretical sample from groups facilitated by different facilitators in order to minimize influence from a particular facilitator.

To examine quality in a grounded theory study, Corbin and Strauss (2008) discuss ten criteria: fit, applicability, concepts, contextualization of concepts, logic, depth, variation, creativity, sensitivity, and evidence of memos. These are examined in order to ascertain the quality of the findings.

The criterion of *fit* refers to how well the findings ring true for professionals and those who participated in the study. As only one interview was planned with each participant, the issue of fit was addressed throughout the study as data is analyzed and informs directions for future interviews. The theory is understandable by those who work in the field and allows them to identify areas for assessing strength and challenges of fathers.

The second criterion, *applicability*, refers to how useful the findings are. The goal was to develop findings that were useful for increasing the knowledge base of the topic. Additionally, the findings should offer insights to inform practice or policy related to the phenomenon. The developed theory allows for increasing knowledge of this understudied population.

Concepts is the third criterion. This refers to how well developed the findings are, if the properties and dimensions of concepts are rich and dense. The findings should be sufficiently developed that the readers can understand what is being explained. The resulting theory provides well developed concepts and a range of dimensions.

The next criterion is the *contextualization of concepts*. It is important that the concepts are discussed in light of their contexts. By explicating the relevant contexts, the reader has a more complete understanding of the phenomenon under discussion. Context was a fundamental and well explained aspect of the theory.

Logic is the fifth criterion. This refers to a clear description of the methodological decisions such that readers can follow and judge their appropriateness. This also refers to reasonable logic and flow of ideas. The logic of the developed theory is apparent. It can also be traced through iterations of the theory and its diagrams.

The sixth criterion is *depth*, which refers to the details and substance of the findings. The findings must be described in sufficient detail and depth in order create a rich theory capable of impacting action for a specific phenomenon. The theory includes quotes and explanation of the lives of the participants to provide sufficient depth of their experiences.

Variation is the seventh criterion. This refers to examining a range of cases in order to examine variation in the data. The researcher must look for negative cases, which don't fit developing patterns, as well as differences based on context and properties. By attending to variation, the researcher is examining the complexity inherent in human functioning. Maximum variation sampling was utilized and a great deal of variation of cases was included.

Creativity is the eighth criterion. This refers to both process and product. The goal is for the researcher to present results in an innovative way and to uncover a theory that presents new information about the phenomenon. The researcher must utilize the procedures of grounded theory in flexible and creative ways that suit the research at hand. While staying true to the words and experiences of the participants, creativity was used to develop a useful theory for practitioners and researchers.

The ninth criterion is *sensitivity*. It is essential that the researcher exhibit sensitivity throughout the research process, with both the participants and the data. Additionally, the researcher must maintain openness to what the participants and data say, without forcing

preconceived ideas on the data. This researcher maintained a reflexive journal, and an awareness of the sensitive nature of the topics being discussed. The researcher was patient and sensitive during interviews and stayed true to the data while formulating the theory.

The final criterion is *evidence of memos*. Although listed last, this is considered one of the most essential criteria. Using memos allows the researcher to capture their thoughts, insights, questions and process as they progress through the research. The sorting of memos allows the researcher to remember ideas throughout the process and moves the analysis forward. This researcher maintained memos throughout the process. These captured insights, challenges, concerns and the unfolding process of theory development.

Limitations of the Study

The fact that a single researcher conducted all of the interviews presents both strengths and challenges. As I participated in all of the interviews, I was able to hear the responses of each participant first hand, which aided in the constant comparison process. However, attention was paid so that this did not limit openness to new and alternate ideas as other researcher perspective were not involved. The use of the peer reviewer was invaluable in helping to ensure the analysis remained focused and open. Another potential limitation of the study is that one or more significant dimensions of the phenomenon may go unexplored. As the literature guided the interview questions, even with changes in probes, it is possible that an aspect of the topic which this researcher did not uncover in the literature review phase was not included. It was hoped that by covering the salient issues identified in the literature while remaining open to new ideas and possibilities, that many important dimensions were pursued. However, given limitations on participant's time and the reality that the study must be bounded, it is possible that some

important topics remain unexplored. This is developmental research and the real identification of the limits will be clearer when the substantive theory undergoes further testing.

Conclusion

Increasing understanding of effective treatment intervention for parents who are considered high risk or have maltreated their child is of paramount importance for practitioners, parents, children, and society as a whole. In order to increase efficacy, it is important to gather information from the parents who are engaged in current services. By utilizing their perspectives, researchers can generate theories to design better treatments, which will better meet the needs of clients. This study aimed to do this through a traditional grounded theory research design.

This study examined parents who have a substantiated incident of maltreatment or were involved in a conflictual custody battle in order to understand their perspectives to help generate theory to explain and predict what will work better in future groups. This study fills a gap about fathers which currently exists. The potential exists to generate beneficial theories to help steer future intervention with this population of parents. Due to the widespread nature of this problem and the limited literature regarding fathers' perspectives on the benefits and limitations of current parenting programs, it is believed that this study is an important step to help guide future interventions and minimize future risk to children.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to learn more about fathering from the perspective and words of fathers who had experienced challenges with issues related to child maltreatment. The study was particularly concerned with the attitudes and behaviors of these fathers, as well as their strengths. Additionally, the study focused on the contexts in which fathering took place. By undertaking an analysis of the data, a grounded theory was developed to help answer the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes, behaviors and contexts of fathers that relate to maltreatment?
2. What are the resources and capacities of these fathers which could be capitalized on?
3. How does goodness-of-fit or a poor fit between the father and child impact the parenting relationships of these fathers?

Through analysis of the demographic forms and semi-structured interviews, a grounded theory was developed entitled Fathering in a Context of Challenge and Complexity. This is not a theory of perfect or ideal fathering; rather, it is concerned with fathering that is “good enough,” responding to needs of the child and providing time, attention and nurturing that is sufficient in quantity and quality. Acceptable fathering includes recognition of father’s strengths, having support from family and friends, managing challenges, and managing resources. The focus on

managing challenges and resources are necessary in order to provide acceptable fathering that in some cases could be later enhanced.

This theory suggests various relationships and factors which influence acceptable fathering. It helps clarify the challenges and complexity experienced by these fathers. It also illuminates areas where interventions could occur in order to enhance acceptable fathering and create better child wellbeing. This theory is comprised of four categories that are proposed to lead to acceptable fathering (the core category of the grounded theory): father's family of origin, father's individual profile, father's relationship with the mother(s) of his children, and father's relationships with his children. Father's family of origin impacts the overall profile of the father and these two categories together impact the father's relationships with the mother(s) of his children and all of this complexity relates to his relationships with his children. Together this results in what could be considered to be acceptable fathering. The concept "acceptable" was selected to distinguish this theory of fathering from the ideas of "successful" or "excellent" fathering. As father's family of origin is the category which precedes the others from a time perspective, it will be discussed first.

Father's Family of Origin

A father's family of origin is where he first learns about family. In most cases, he experiences positive and negative interactions and relationships. He learns what it means to be a parent by what is provided to him. As he is growing up, he is impacted by problems that his own parents experience. He is also the recipient of skills, values and lessons that his family of origin provides. Father's discussed three subcategories which will be discussed in descending order of

frequency. These include father involvement in family of origin; learning from family of origin; and parenting practices of family of origin.

Own father's involvement in family of origin. Fourteen fathers discussed their own father's involvement. Fathers involved in this study had mixed experiences regarding their own father's involvement. Twelve fathers noted at least some positive involvement by their father. They reported learning lessons from their father including the importance of working hard, being responsible, and the importance of being involved with your children. A father of five commented, "I learned a lot from him" (153). One participant stated, "He (my Dad) worked a lot, I'm sure he was tired, but he always played with me" (155). One noted, "My father was always there" (163). Another father stated, "The best thing he (my Dad) did was raising me, being there for me" (159).

Nine fathers, including those whose own father was involved and those who were minimally involved, noted negative aspects of their relationship with their father. One father stated, "He didn't show me love or anything" (161). Another stated, "He has a lot of flaws that I didn't want to repeat with my children" (164). Another noted that his father didn't share his emotions. "He didn't express his true feelings. You knew he loved you, but he didn't say it much" (152). Some of the fathers seemed willing to accept whatever their fathers were able to provide. One stated, "My dad moved out when they separated. I didn't see him as much. He got me my first car when I was 19. He was there when it counted" (159). Another reported, "He was a summertime/holiday dad until my daughter was born, then I heard from him more. We're close now" (156). Another participant whose father was largely uninvolved in his life commented, "I loved him for who he was" (162).

Five of the fathers reported that their own father was not involved or only minimally involved in their life while growing up. Each of these five fathers reported that the lack of involvement by their own father motivated them to be more involved with their own children. “It (my father’s lack of involvement) motivated me to give my kids something I never had, a father” (165). “My Dad was a holiday and summertime Dad and I always told myself I didn’t want to be like that. That motivated me to be in their (my children’s) lives their whole life. I love it.” (156).

The relationships with their own father and his level of involvement were important factors. However, other family members conveyed important lessons as well. The next subcategory examines relationships and learning from other family members.

Learning from family of origin. Fathers noted both positive and negative elements of their family of origin. Thirteen fathers discussed learning that occurred within their family of origin. This included learning from their mother, father, or both parents, as well as other close relatives. Fathers noted both positive and negative lessons that were taught, both through instruction and modeling. It was apparent that the behaviors of their parents, their parents’ challenges, and the relationships within their family of origin impacted the fathers.

Table 4.1	
Positives in Family of Origin	
Taught Important Lessons	8
Grandmother Played Important Role	4
Value of Extended Family	3
Change is Possible	2
Mother had Role of Mom and Dad	2
Provided Nurture and Affection	2

Positive aspects. Twelve fathers reported that they were taught important lessons in their family of origin. These included the importance of honesty, resilience, and responsibility. Fathers also described learning the importance of nurture and affection. Several noted a very positive relationship with their mother, while 2 fathers stated that their mother was both mother and father to them. Two fathers noted that they learned that change was possible in their family of origin. They referred to seeing parents get off drugs (161), and realize previous parenting mistakes (162). Another father noted that he learned that although his mother had a very difficult childhood, he realized that a person can have good in them despite experiencing an abusive past (157).

Several noted that their grandmother played an important role in their life. “Grandma was the rock of the whole family” (156). In some cases the grandmother provided emotional and financial support which was essential to the family. This father went on to state, “She (my mom) tried to raise me, but her sickle cell would act up and my grandma had to take custody because they were trying to take me from my mom because of her sickle cell.”

The value of extended family was noted by three fathers. This included aunts, uncles and grandparents. Another father noted that his family of origin impacted his sense of marriage. “What has allowed me to grow and look forward to becoming a husband and father is seeing a lot of my family members have long marriages. Nowadays you don’t see that, always hear about divorce” (158). Fathers also commented on problematic aspects of their families of origin.

Table 4.2	
Problems in Family of Origin	
Type	Total
Parent had Substance Abuse Issues	3
Lack of Supervision	2
Never had Limits/Consequences	2
Parent had Mental Health Issues	2
Witnessed IPV with Parents	2
Unclear/Inappropriate Roles (Parentified)	2
Father incarcerated	1

Problematic aspects. Eight of the fathers noted a variety of problems within their family of origin. Fathers reported several areas of concern as well as lessons learned which were negative or unhealthy. These included: one or more parents with substance abuse issues; lack of supervision; not having limits or consequences; a parent with mental health issues; witnessing intimate partner violence (IPV) with one or more of their parents; role reversal between themselves and their mother where they were parentified; and having a father who was incarcerated during their childhood. One father stated, “I was never a kid. I was the husband-man. That’s what my mom called me. It was my job to be a grown up” (162). Fathers also discussed their experiences with both nurturing and abusive parenting practices.

Parenting Practices in Family of Origin. The fathers who participated had a range of experiences from nurturing to abusive. Eleven fathers discussed parenting practices that occurred within their family of origin. These experiences were not unidimensional in that some of the fathers who were abused or neglected also received nurturing from his parents.

Father's personal experience of nurturing. Ten fathers described at least some healthy and nurturing parenting experiences from one or more of his parents. These included having a good relationship with his mother (n=3); receiving nurture and affection (n=2); receiving good advice (n=2); feeling supported (n=2); being able to talk openly with parent (n=2); and feeling protected (n=1). Notably, only two of the fathers described nurturing experiences from their father, the remainder all involved nurturing interactions with their mother.

Two fathers noted receiving nurturing and affection from their mother. "I learned hugs (from Mom), she's very affectionate" (155). Another stated, "The nurturing part comes from my Mom" (162). One noted about his father, "I've seen him cry, be sad, mad, happy. So it was easy for me to do these things and show my kids" (158). Others felt supported by their mothers through advice giving and attendance at sports events. "She was a housewife, came to all of my sports games" (158).

In some of these situations, the participants felt nurtured; however, there appeared to be inappropriate boundaries or other concerns. One father stated, "Me and my mama were like best friends" (165). Another father whose mother had been in multiple relationships where IPV occurred stated, "She told them (her boyfriends) not to put their hands on us" (161).

Father's personal experience of abuse/neglect. Six fathers reported that they received physical punishment as a child. In most of these cases, the punishment was severe and would be classified as abuse by today's standards. One participant stated, "My granddaddy tore our tail up" (165). Some of the fathers normalized their treatment and did not believe their treatment was abusive. One father stated, "My parents weren't abusive. They beat us, but weren't abusive" (163). While for another, getting beaten was one of the limited occasions when he saw

his father who was a heroin user and frequently in jail. “My mom would take us to jail for whippings. That was his (my father’s) role. I resented my dad a lot. That’s all he ever was. When I got older and bigger, he couldn’t beat me no more” (162).

Two of the participants noted Department of Social Services (DSS) involvement when they were growing up. In one case, his mother’s illness prevented her from providing the care he needed and DSS became involved. His grandmother took custody to prevent him from going into foster care. In another case, Child Protective Services (CPS) removed the children due to his mother’s drug use. He and his sibling went into an orphanage. His grandmother later took custody until his mother went into treatment and afterwards was able to care for the children.

A father’s experiences in his family of origin seem to have both positive and negative effects. In the family of origin, parenting behaviors were modeled and these fathers learned from them. Some fathers experienced various difficulties such as living with a parent’s substance abuse or untreated mental health issues. Some had mothers who were ill or fathers who were minimally involved. These relationships and issues seemed to impact the father growing up and when he became a father. Family of origin appears to influence who the person is or has been and who he becomes as a father. As family of origin seems to directly influence the father, his individual profile comes next in the theory. The following category examines a father’s individual profile and the ways various factors may influence his own fathering.

Father’s Individual Profile

Every father has different challenges and strengths. For the fathers in this study, salient experiences included willingness to learn; willingness to change; work and school; incarceration; having children at a young age; social fathering; mental health issues; substance abuse;

persistence; and preparation. Each of these factors may impact his relationships with his children's mother as well as his children. These experiences are discussed in order of importance determined by their frequency.

Willingness to learn. Fathers described four primary means of learning: learning through experiences, learning through observation, learning in parenting class, and learning from significant other. Fourteen of the fifteen fathers discussed willingness to learn during their interview. One father noted, "Every day is a learning experience. You're never going to stop learning" (160). When another was asked how he would describe himself as a father he stated, "Still learning" (155).

Learning through experiences. Twelve of the fathers commented that they had learned about fathering through various experiences. "Everything I'm going through, I accept it because it's a learning experience" (152). Within learning through experiences, fathers described multiple ways they learned. These included: raising children; learning from parents and relatives; life experiences; learning from mistakes; learning from helping with siblings; and learning through social fathering. One father stated, "Sometimes other people who have been through tough experiences become a good parent because they learn a lot from it" (155).

Learning from raising children. Seven fathers commented on the learning that comes from the experience of raising children. A father of four stated, "The experience of trying to be the best father you can be. The trials and tribulations of learning. Got to go through it" (159). A father of seven children commented that when raising kids, "You learn from experiences" (152). Another father noted a change that he made as a result of experiences with his children.

At first, I would spend a lot of money on nice clothes (for the kids), and they would get them dirty and I'd be upset. Then I realized I couldn't do that. So now I put them in play clothes so I don't worry about it. (165)

Fathers with multiple children commented on the learning that came from raising their older children. "With my first son, dealing with Pampers and stuff, I didn't know what to do. It got easier and better when more kids came" (153). Another father noted a personal change over the course of raising seven children. "Now I'm humble. I learned things from raising my older kids, like time out" (152). A father of two noted a growth trajectory. "With oldest, I didn't know then what I know now. Now I'm doing a whole lot better (as a father)" (155).

Learning from parents and relatives. Six fathers commented that they had learned about being a father from their parents and other family members. One father noted that both his parents were influential. "The relationship between my mother and father. My mother taught me a lot and my father taught me a lot too. I learned how to be a family" (154). Another father noted that his parents were a source of learning, "They took the time for me" (155). A father of four who was primarily raised by his mother stated, "She taught me to be a family man. When other kids were outside playing, I was connected to mom's apron strings. She taught me to cook, take care of a household" (162).

Learning from life. Six fathers reported that various life experiences had been important in helping them learn about fathering. For a father of two, it was general life experiences that helped him learn. He stated, "I learn a lot from past experiences" (155). For another father, his military background was helpful. "My military background helped (in parenting). It helped me

with discipline and to listen to peers” (164). A father who has owned his own business and managed a construction crew found this experience to be helpful in regard to parenting.

I’m self-employed and have 17 guys working for me. Every one of them has a different personality, you have to deal with their anger, attitude. You have to work around it, talk to them and communicate with them. It helped, before I had kids, I supervised these men. (160)

Learning from mistakes. Five of the fathers noted that they have learned from past mistakes. Some of these mistakes were those they had made in their own childhood, others were those made in adulthood. A father of seven stated, “I learn from my own mistakes (from childhood)” (152). One stated, “I’ve grown from my past. I’m not going backwards. You can always do better, but I’m happy” (158). Another stated, “I know what my mistakes were when I was younger, and I learned from them” (159).

Learning from helping with siblings. Four fathers noted that helping with their siblings while growing up helped them learn about fathering. “My mom said I taught my brother and sisters to walk, I fed them” (153). A father of four who played a large role in helping to care for his siblings due to his mother’s depression stated, “I was always a Dad, even before I became a Dad...I had to take care of my brother and sister. I made bottles, changed diapers, sang songs to put her (sister) to sleep” (162). A father of twelve stated, “I helped raise my brothers and sisters, since I am the oldest of five” (165).

Learning from social fathering. Three of the fathers who participated noted that helping to care for previous girlfriend’s children helped them learn how to care for their own. A father of two noted, “Helping with past girlfriends kids helped prepare me. Change diapers, learn about

stages...learn about responsibility. It taught me a little” (156). Another father stated, “I see people communicate with kids in a way they won’t understand. I learned how to talk to her (ex-girlfriend) 3-year old, which helped prepare me as my kids got older” (164).

Learning through observation. Ten fathers found that another important form of learning came through observing others. When asked about helpful education he had received, one father stated, “Watching how other father’s treat their kids” (161). Another stated, “Watching how other families treat their children, I weigh the pros and cons” (154).

One father mentioned that observing his brother-in-law has influenced his own parenting. “He grew up without a father. His father wasn’t involved. He’s a really good Dad ...I picked up on what he did...With his oldest child he was just so loving and caring” (152). Another participant noted that his brother has been a positive role model. “He has seven kids, one on the way. He’s a good dad. He tries to do his best. Even though he can’t always see them, he always talks about them, loves them” (156).

Three fathers mentioned that they have learned through observing negative interactions. One father noted that seeing how his mother was treated impacted how he treats women and helped prepare him to be a Dad. “Seeing my mom’s relationships. She was in some rough relationships” (161). Another father observed problems in the lives of children at the Boys and Girls Club where his father worked. He noted that seeing kids whose home life included parents on drugs and uninvolved fathers, “Makes me want to work harder as a parent so those things don’t happen to yours” (158).

Learning from parenting class. While fourteen of the fifteen participants at the time of this project had attended some type of parenting class in the past or currently, ten reported that it

was helpful. When asked in general about education or training they had received that had been helpful, nine of thirteen fathers mentioned Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN); two fathers had not yet begun classes at SCAN.

Some of the fathers responded that they were initially uncertain or angry about being told they needed to attend a parenting class. “At first I wasn’t down with it. My girlfriend talked me into it” (161). Another father stated, “When I first had to go to parenting I was quite angry” (164). Some fathers recognized some of their limitations during the course of the parenting group. A father of seven stated, “I thought I was a perfect father until I started going to parenting class” (152). Another stated, “I’ve been a good father, but still need to work on some things and this class (SCAN) has brought it out. I’ve made some mistakes, that’s why I’m in the class” (156).

Fathers identified new skills and information. One father noted that SCAN has helped him learn information relevant to his children’s experiences, “I’m picking up a lot of things about child trauma and other things” (152). Another father stated, “We was talking about tools we can use to help teach our children and it was basically the wrongs we was doing” (151).

Fathers said that parenting class helped them with discipline skills, to better understand their child, and ways to respond. One father noted that SCAN was helpful in “Learning alternatives... Time out, take away toys. They were necessary reminders of what I was already doing. It was very wonderful. I’m trying to get back into another SCAN class. SCAN is very helpful” (157). Another father who was initially angry that he needed to attend admitted that it has been helpful in his interactions with his oldest child. “With my older son, SCAN helped me

realize that he misses his mom. At parenting, I learned other ways to deal with his frustrations. I wish I could have done it earlier” (164).

Fathers also seemed to find positives in the group experience. One father found support in both a fatherhood group and SCAN group. “Once you get in the group and see how other people feel and what they’re going through you know you’re not alone” (151). Another stated about SCAN, “One reason this class helped me out is that we talk about situations and you listen to other people and what they have dealt with” (155). A father of one stated, “Having the SCAN group has allowed me to share experiences. It has been wonderful” (157). Finally, the aspect of sharing knowledge and experiences with other group members was noted as a powerful aspect of the group experience. “In SCAN, I was able to share with the group about what I’d been through in court. I felt like I was able to help other members” (158).

Learning from significant other. A fourth way fathers reported learning how to be a father was from their relationships with significant others. Three of the participants noted that their wives or girlfriends were important to their learning about parenting. One father reported being challenged when helping to care for his ex’s two children. “It was new to me, I was stuck. I didn’t know what to do, but I watched her and learned from her” (151). Other fathers reported that their significant other taught them specific skills. One reported that his wife, “taught me more about the nurturing. She’s fun, happy, teaches the kids songs. She’s helped me out with that” (164). He went on to say that he has learned valuable lessons from the mothers of his oldest two kids as well. “Their moms already had kids, so they helped me out and I got to learn from them: changing diapers; how to talk to a kid so they can understand; learn between different types of cries; learned about WIC.” Another father noted the important role his wife has played.

“She’s been that person that I needed to get me back on the path I was originally on. To challenge me, not just agree, gives me another perspective” (158).

Willingness to change. Fourteen fathers identified a wide range of behaviors they had changed since becoming a father. Only one father stated that he has not changed since becoming a father. Some identified the pregnancy and/or birth of their child as a turning point in their life. “Back then, I was going down the wrong road. I’m still paying for some of those mistakes. Having my oldest was a turning point. It helped me focus on what really matters in life...” (164). Two stated that they stopped using or selling drugs due to becoming a father. One of these participants stated, “I used to sell drugs, making good money. If she (child 1) hadn’t come, I most likely would have continued. I tried to get the right kind of money, get a job, so I wouldn’t get in trouble. When I had my first child that basically saved me.” (156).

A focus on spending time at home and staying off the streets was noted by several. “The day my oldest daughter arrived it stopped. There was no more hanging out at night, I was always at home. I never spent the night away from home” (162). Some fathers recognized the birth of their children as a point of growth in their lives. “It’s been a humbling experience and helped me grow and understand my role in life” (158). Three fathers reported that they like themselves better since having children. One stated, “Being a father has made me a better person” (155).

Fathers reported that becoming a father helped them become more responsible and mature. “I’ve learned to prioritize more” (158). “I learned not to spend everything on myself, it isn’t about me no more” (165). Some (n=2) fathers noticed an increase in patience after their children were born. “I’m more patient. They will try you and I just got to the point where I became more patient because they’re children, they won’t think like adults” (155).

The majority of the fathers (n=12) identified one or more behaviors that they would currently like to change; three of the participants stated there were no behaviors they needed to change. Some of the fathers identified one area of concern, while others identified multiple behaviors they would like to change. One participant stated, “There’s a lot I need to work on as a father” (153).

Patience was identified as a concern for two of the fathers. “You have to be real patient with kids and that was an issue when my oldest was little” (164). Another stated, “I have short patience. When my kids cry all at once, it just didn’t make me want to be around because I couldn’t take it” (151).

Two fathers identified that smoking cigarettes was a problem they wish to change. “I smoke cigarettes, but try to hide it from the kids so they won’t learn about that” (164). Another stated, “I cut down and try not to smoke around the kids” (154).

Other areas of concern included their spanking system; letting the children play too many video games; yelling, talking to their children; and increasing their level of sensitivity. One father noted, “I need to be a little more easy on myself. My wife says I beat myself up over the mistakes I make. I am hard on myself. It hasn’t been easy being me. I want to be better” (162).

In addition to willingness to learn and willingness to change, there were several other areas of the father’s individual profile which seem to impact his ability to achieve acceptable fathering. The next most frequently discussed area was work and school.

Work/schooling. Eleven fathers commented on aspects of their work and schooling. The desire for more education and/or a better job was expressed by eight fathers. “I need to get my GED, take more classes so I can take care of my kids. I would like to do auto mechanics or

computer repair” (156). “I wish I could have finished school, gone to college or the Navy. I wish I could find a better job than what I got now” (161). “I’m doing whatever type of job to get a dollar, it’s better than stealing” (153).

Four fathers reported finishing high school. One who became a father at 17 stated, “I was able to finish school...I went into the family business in the body shop and could make more money” (152). A father who had two children by the time he was 18 stated, “I worked and went to high school, I graduated. I started college...I’ve been at the same job for 12 years (159). Two fathers are self-employed, which they reported gave them some control over their schedule.

Three fathers reported that having a felony/prison history has made finding a job more difficult. “I wanted to get in with the government for a job, but because of my felony, I can’t” (155). Another father with a prison history reported, “If employers would give me an interview and a chance, they’ll see I’m a hard worker and a stickler for being on time” (162).

Various situational or societal factors have impacted the work history of others. One father stated, “I had a good business, then my tools were stolen and I went into the family business” (152). During the recent recession another father was laid off from a position which paid well. “The whole year of 2009 I had to take a job at McDonalds to make ends meet. I think it humbled me and made me realize money isn’t everything” (158). When asked what he needs to be the father he hopes to be, a father who is currently parenting alone reported, “I need a fantastic job with a patient boss that pays well” (157).

The following subcategory is closely tied to work and school as it can disrupt education and impact one’s ability to find employment. The next subcategory related to acceptable

fathering is that of incarceration. Sixty percent of the fathers who participated in this study had experienced one or more periods of incarceration.

Incarceration. Nine of the fathers in this study were incarcerated either before having children, while awaiting the birth of a child, or after having children. Four of the fifteen fathers were incarcerated before any of their children were born. There were various reasons for the incarceration including drugs and violence. One father noted that his incarceration was related to his gang involvement.

Due to the fact of me running with the Latin Kings, I became a lieutenant, really you can't get out...When I was incarcerated over something crazy I won't discuss, they put me down as a security threat and I was in solitary confinement for 22 months. (154)

The length of incarceration was also variable. One father had a short stint in jail before his children were born, "One time at 18 for a fight with my brother for a week" (157). Another was incarcerated for a total of nine years, primarily in other states. This man became a father while incarcerated. "I didn't know I had a son because I was incarcerated" (151). Several of these participants (4) noted that being incarcerated was a helpful, life-changing experience. "I just learned to think twice before doing things" (158). Another father stated that his time in prison impacted his parenting, "That's why I'm adamant on raising kids the right way" (154).

For those fathers who were incarcerated after the birth of a child, the incarceration experience was noted as significant. There were a variety of reasons for the incarceration including drugs, violence, child support, and child abuse. Six of the 15 fathers experienced incarceration since the time they became a father.

Some fathers (n=6) reported that being incarcerated has impacted them individually. “It impacted me as a person. Since then I’ve never done anything wrong. It helped me out because the path I was on wasn’t good” (155). A father of four who spent eight years incarcerated stated, “Prison was a blessing. I like to say I’ve been drug free since the day I went to prison, almost 13 years ago. I guess prison was necessary in order for me to get my life back” (162). Another father stated that being in prison, “It slowed me down a lot. Made me think about my life and what kind of path I wanted, think about myself” (161).

Some had regular contact with one or more of their children while “locked up,” while others did not. Several fathers (3) mentioned that it impacted their relationship with their child. One father stated,

My daughter knew who I was because they showed her pictures. My parents sometimes brought her (oldest daughter) to visit me, but she was confused, didn’t know who I was. I spent time in prison in Oklahoma, Indiana, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. (151)

Another father reported that while incarcerated for eight months, “I got to see three of my oldest four kids every week. I was happy to see them. I wanted them to come; I wanted to see my kids” (165). One father who spent nearly two years in jail was uncomfortable with his son seeing him incarcerated. He stated, “He came when I was locked up; I didn’t want him to come” (155).

Several (n=3) noted that incarceration had an impact on their relationship with their children. One father realized the extent of these losses as he experienced significant milestones with his younger children. “With my youngest children I really see what I missed out on. I missed out on graduations from elementary school; watching my oldest daughter and son first

walk; missed them saying daddy or mommy for the first time” (151). Another father stated, “The eight year separation had a profound effect on my children” (162).

Some (n=3) fathers reported that family members including their wife, mother, and other relatives helped with the children during the time of their incarceration. One father noted that during the eight years he was in prison, “That’s where my wife held the family together, while I was gone” (162). Another father’s mother stepped in while he was incarcerated, “When my mom had custody, that’s when I was in jail. I did a year and ten months” (155).

Lastly, three fathers noted that their incarceration history impacted their ability to find a job after their release, thus impacting their ability to support their family. One father noted that his felony limits his employment options, “I need a more secure job...I’m going to school now.” (155). Another father commented on the difficulty of finding a job given his incarceration history, “I stress about the job thing. I’ve put in 162 applications in the last two months. We don’t have a car right now, so I leave the house at 6am every morning to catch a bus so I can look for a job” (162).

It is important to note that of the nine fathers who were incarcerated, one subset experienced substance abuse (n=6) and another subset had mental health issues (n=6). Four fathers experienced a combination of incarceration, substance abuse and mental health issues. Six of the nine fathers who were incarcerated were fathers at or before the age of 21.

Fathering at a young age. For the purposes of this study, young father denotes those who were 21 or younger at the time of their first child’s birth. Some were anxious about the baby or still in shock from learning that they were expecting a child. Some (n=3) stated that they were too young and not ready to be a father. Five of the fathers in this study became a father

before the age of 21. When including those who became a father at the age of 21, the count rises to nine. One participant stated, “When I was growing up, all my friends were having kids early, I was the last. At least I waited until I was 18” (156). Some (n=6) fathers stated that they felt scared or unprepared for fatherhood. One father stated that he saw the baby as someone to provide him with love. He remembered being 20 years old and learning he was going to be a father, “My first kid and I thought I’d been through so much pain in my life and felt like I was never loved so when I have this kid, I know I’ll have love” (153).

Some fathers (n=4) stated that they were very involved in the pregnancy and eagerly awaited the birth of their child. Four of the young fathers stated they were present for the birth of one or more of their children. One participant who became a father at age 17 stated, “I was very excited” (152). Three fathers stated that it spurred their growth and level of responsibility. One who became a father at 18 stated, “I had to grow up” (156). Another father who became a parent at age 16 stated, “Having a kid at that age, you’re not ready mentally, physically, socially. You shouldn’t have a kid at that age” (159).

Fathers who waited to have children generally felt more prepared. One father who had his first child at age 29 stated, “I waited to have my first kid, I didn’t want to rush. I was well prepared to be able to provide for them and have a job, transportation, all set up” (160). A father who had his first child at age 40 stated,

I was ecstatic. I was happy. I was elated. I was ready for him. If I had him earlier he wouldn’t have had the love. I was ex-military and I wouldn’t have been able to give him the love and attention and nurturing he would want. (Earlier) I was grown physically, but not mentally. (154)

Social fathering. Nine of the 15 fathers had been or continue to be a social father to one or more children. Tamis-Lemonda and Cabrera (2002) define social fathering as “males in children’s lives who assume fathering roles” (p. 601), which may include relatives, friends or mother’s partner. For all but one of the nine fathers in this study, these were reported to be positive relationships. In some situations, the participant cared for a girlfriend’s children before he had children of his own. In other situations, a current girlfriend had children of her own. In several instances (n=5), the relationships with the children continued after the relationship with the girlfriend ended. One father noted that his own father’s lack of involvement in his childhood influenced him, “With my father situation, when the women I was with didn’t have daddy’s involved, I wanted to be there for the kids” (156).

A father of five noted that he has played a parenting role with many children other than his own biological children. “Every relationship I ever had, they all had kids. The girl I’m with, she’s got a 3-year old daughter. She calls me step-daddy” (153). Another father noted that his relationship with those he was a social father for continued long after his relationship with their mother ended:

I’ve had children who looked up to me as a father figure because they didn’t know their father and I played that father role with them. When the lady and I broke up, I sat the kids down and said I’d still be there. I was in that relationship for nine years. They are now 23 and 18 and they still call me Daddy. We still talk every week. (154)

A father of three noted that his relationship with the children he was a social father for continues even though they now live in another state. “My middle son’s mother has three other kids. I was the only father they knew for two years. I changed their diapers and gave them

baths. They're in New York, but I talk to them on the phone" (164). Another father reported that he is very involved in the care of his girlfriend's daughter:

I help teach my girlfriend's little girl a lot. I potty trained her. I try to tell my girlfriend not to spank her. I don't believe in touching (spanking) other people's kids, because I don't even touch my own kids. Women will get so in love with you that they'll want you to beat their kids, but I won't do it. (153)

A father of four reports that even though he and his wife are married and he has known his step-daughter for five years, there are significant issues:

My wife has an 11-year old daughter. I have a step-daughter. We don't even talk, not at all. It's too hard. I tried so hard with her. Now I don't even have a conversation with her. It's too difficult...I've mentally given up. (159)

Three fathers noted that social fathering is different than parenting your biological children. "My kids' mom had babies before we had kids. But it's different when it's yours" (153). When referring to prior girlfriends' children, a father of two stated, "I had love for those kids, but not the love I have for my own" (156).

A father of twelve noted that he feels very close to his 12-year old step-son and considers him one of his children, even though he is no longer with the boy's mother:

We have a good relationship, but other people get involved. His other relatives tell him he doesn't need to listen to me because I'm not his father. My step-son is my son. I teach him to do chores, I'm the one who provides for him. I plan to always be involved in his life. (165)

Note that of the nine participants who were social fathers, six experienced mental health issues; four were incarcerated; and three had substance abuse challenges. Seven of the nine social fathers became biological fathers at or before the age of 21.

Mental health. While 7 of the 15 fathers in this study reported no mental health issues, it was a significant concern for the remaining eight. Four fathers reported that they had mental health concerns before having children. These fathers reported struggling with schizophrenia, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and anxiety. One father stated,

I am diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. It's challenging, but as long as I take my medicine I'm okay. I think I've been living with it a long time, but didn't know what it was. My parents are from the country in North Carolina, so they don't look at stuff like that seriously, they just probably think you're hard headed. But the whole time I'm thinking there's something wrong but I just didn't know who to tell. (151)

Another father noted,

When I got out of the military I had post-traumatic stress. I was overseas for 18 months. That took me a while to get a handle on...I met with a therapist for six months, it was helpful. I was able to sleep better. At first I was in denial that I had problems with it, but then a car would backfire or there would be a loud noise and I'd be in a whole different mode. (164)

For the four fathers with mental health issues before their children were born, in half of these cases this continued to be a challenge after their children were born. Some (n=4), who had not previously experienced mental health issues, experienced them while fathering. Some of the diagnoses these fathers reported included depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia. Two of the

participants reported attempting to hide symptoms from their children. One participant also discussed the impact of mental health issues on his marriage.

Six fathers reported that mental health issues existed since the time they became a father. One father stated that he struggled with,

Depression all the time, stress all the time. I was previously hospitalized for suicidal ideation. I'm still depressed but I'm doing a lot better, I don't have it to the level that I would hurt myself. If I'm depressed and my kids come around, I just block it out or throw in a movie and chill. (153)

Often, the fathers believed that they were able to hide their symptoms from their children. "I kept my problems (with depression) separate from the kids. When they saw me I was happy and focused" (162). Even a father (153) who reported feeling "stressed all the time" denied that it impacted his parenting. A father who has struggled with depression and anxiety reported, "It doesn't affect my parenting." (159)

Some fathers (n=3) reported that they struggled with depression or anxiety due to situational factors, such as infertility or their children being placed in foster care. For others, the struggle with anxiety or depression was a long-standing issue. A few (n=3) sought treatment and were able to manage their illness through medication and/or counseling. One father acknowledged that his mental health issues impacted his relationship with his wife, stating:

I have anxiety problems. I just started taking Celexa... It does impact my marriage. I get angry with my wife, I argue when I'm anxious... It's stressful being anxious all the time, I get nervous, jittery, I've always had that. (159)

Substance abuse. Nearly half (n=7) of the fathers in this study reported having struggled with various substances including marijuana, alcohol, cocaine and heroin at some point in their lives. Some of the fathers in the study (n=2) reported abusing substances only before they had children, while others reported that their substance abuse continued or began after their children were born. Eight of the 15 fathers reported that substance abuse was not a problem for them.

Of the four fathers who struggled with substance abuse before having children, for half this continued after the children were born. One stated, “When I was younger I smoked weed, drank. Once daughter came, I stopped smoking weed. Now I will occasionally drink” (156). Another father reported that alcohol had been a significant issue for him before his children were born.

I was abusing it terribly. I would drink 2 12-packs of beer and a bottle of Paul Massant.

I was a straight alcoholic back then. I just stopped in 2004. After being locked up, I didn’t really want to drink so much. I drink now, but in my house, not on the streets like I used to. Now I would drink maybe three beers and two shots. (161)

Seven fathers reported that substance abuse was an issue during at least some of the time they were fathering. Substance abuse often resulted in curtailing time with one’s children, either purposefully or involuntarily. A participant stated, “When I smoked (marijuana) I didn’t go around the kids because I didn’t want them to see me like that” (151). One father acknowledged that his drug use resulted in forced restrictions on seeing his child, “I failed a standard courtroom drug test and couldn’t see her (my daughter) for six months” (157). Other participants (n=3) minimized the impact of their drug use on their children. For example, one of the fathers reported a long-standing family history of drug use. He stated, “My entire family used. I grew up getting

high with my mom. I got high with my parents; I smoked pot and cocaine with my dad” (162). Despite his lengthy history of cocaine and heroin use, which eventually resulted in him spending eight years in prison, he did not think it impacted his children. “Other than taking me away from my kids (while in prison), I didn’t let it (heroin use) influence my children” (162).

This participant noted other consequences of his substance abuse. These included his relationship with his wife and his inability to maintain a job. “Because of my drug addiction, my relationship with my wife was strained” (162). He added, “It (my drug addiction) hurt me because I couldn’t maintain a job and I did other things to get money” (162). Substance abuse played a role in his family relationships and ability to support his family, all of which added stress to the family.

Of the seven fathers with substance abuse issues, all of them had experienced other challenges as well. Six of the seven had an incarceration history. Four of the seven had experienced mental health issues. Four of the fathers experienced problems in their family of origin, such as an uninvolved father or a parent with substance abuse issues. Five of the seven with substance abuse challenges experienced two or more of these problems. Three fathers experienced three or more of these problems.

Experiencing such challenges as incarceration, mental health issues and substance abuse were a struggle for many of the fathers. An element of the father’s individual profile which was helpful to several fathers was that of persistence. Tenacity in overcoming obstacles was discussed by 27% of the sample.

Persistence. Four of the fathers described situations where they have demonstrated persistence. These included the need to persist in order to arrange visits with children; acquire

photographs of children; during the court process for custody; or in pursuit of a job. One father who has joint custody of his daughter, reported ongoing difficulty in arranging visits with his daughter. He repeatedly requests visits until his daughter's mother consents. "Since she was a newborn her mom and I had problems. Months would go by and she (daughter's mother) wouldn't let me see her. It's like it be up to her when she want me to see her. I keep asking until she do" (151).

Persistence in some cases resulted in father's increasing visitation with their children or in maintaining a job search despite obstacles. An area that rarely received attention in the lives of these fathers was in preparing for fatherhood. The following subcategory examines the preparation experienced by a minority of the fathers.

Preparation. Only two of the participants noted that they were involved in some form of formal preparation for fathering. One father reported reading books to prepare for parenting. He stated, "I read a lot of fathering and parenting books. They said you have to make the baby comfortable and use touch" (154). The other reported that he and his girlfriend were taught skills by a family friend so they knew how to care for their newborn. He stated, "A family friend was a labor nurse and came in and helped teach us things we needed to know, (it) was helpful" (155).

The remaining 13 fathers reported no specific preparation for parenting, whether formal or informal, before their children were born. One father noted that after his children were born, he sought out information as he needed it. "I have a niece who is a child psychologist and one who is a teacher. If I ask for information about something, they will get it for me" (152). For the

most part, these fathers began fathering their own children without formal knowledge regarding child development, health and safety of babies and children, and positive discipline skills.

These subcategories of the Father's individual profile shed light on some of the struggles experienced by the fathers who participated. These challenges certainly impact the father, including his readiness for fathering, his relationships, his ability to find and maintain work, and his sense of self. The fathers in this study demonstrated that their own experience with their families of origin and their individual profile impacted their relationships with their children's mother(s) and with their children. His relationships with his children's mother(s) will be discussed next as it is impacted by the previous two categories.

Father's Relationships with the Mother(s) of his Children

Fathers who participated in this study described both positive and negative aspects of their relationships with the mothers of their children. In many cases, these challenges impacted father's time and relationships with his children, as well as children's wellbeing. The subcategories examined in order of most frequency reported are: family structure; family size; dynamics; challenges experienced by children's mother(s); communication; and regrets.

Family structure. All fifteen fathers discussed family structure as a part of their relationship with the mothers of their children. For the fathers in this study, a stable structure to the relationship was not always present. "We got married after the second child was born; I was 18. Our relationship was horrible...We were married for two years and together for six or seven. Divorced when I was 23" (159). Some participant fathers were currently married to the mother of one or more children, but have additional children with other mothers. Some of the fathers who are currently unmarried have been in long-term relationships. To better describe their view

of important elements of family structure, multi-partnered fertility will also be examined. It appears that in many ways they were looking beyond the label of married or single in order to describe the structure of their families.

Seven of the fathers in the study were married at the time of the interview. Two fathers have been married for 15 or more years. A father of four commented on his relationship with his wife, “We’ve been together 23 years. Even today, she’s the love of my life” (162). Three fathers reported that they have been with their girlfriend for a long period of time, but never married. “I’ve been with my girlfriend for ten years” (161). A father of 12 noted that he has children with three different women. The mother of his oldest child died and he went on to have six children with mother #2, whom he was with for 14 years. He is currently engaged to the mother of his youngest child.

Multi-partnered fertility. In order to thoroughly discuss their approach to family structure, one must also examine multi-partnered fertility (MFP). MFP is defined as adults who have biological children with more than one partner (Carlson and Furstenberg, 2006). MFP is relevant to 10 of the fathers who participated. Of those fathers with more than one child (n=14), ten (71.4%) have children with more than one partner. Half of the fathers (n=7) in this study with more than one child had children with three or more partners.

Fathers who are no longer romantically linked to their child’s mother, in some cases (n=3) state that they are able to work together as co-parents. Two of the fathers who participated reported that they broke up with the child’s mother even before the child was born. “We broke up before she was born, but by the time she was born we had resolved our problems with each other” (151). One father reported that although he and the children’s mother are no longer in a

romantic relationship, and have relationship difficulties, they continue to live together. He stated,

When CPS removed the kids, at first I kicked her out, but she has no income, hasn't worked for seven years. I told her she could come back. We're living in the same house so we can show them (social services) we can get along to help get the kids back. (154)

In addition to family structure and multi-partnered fertility, another closely related area discussed by fathers is that of family size. Fathers had varying perceptions regarding desired size and their ability to manage the number of children they had.

Family size. Thirteen fathers discussed the size of their family and its impact. The fathers interviewed had mixed feelings regarding the size of their family. The participant with the largest number of children, 12, stated that his family's size "Keeps me motivated" (165). Some fathers noted that one or more of their children were unplanned.

Five fathers reported being satisfied with their family size. One father with four children stated, "It's a good size" (151). Another stated, "I think three kids at home is perfect. Our youngest was a welcome surprise" (163). A father of seven children stated, "It depends on how you are able to manage the size. I can have them all with me and attend to them all" (160).

Five fathers reported that their family size is too big. "Five kids is hard. When they're all together, it's a lot" (153). For another father, it was the number of children combined with his marital status that was the concern. "Two kids is not a good size when you're not married. If I was married, that would be fine. It's nothing against my kids, it's just better when you're married" (155). One father of four boys had three children before becoming involved with his wife. He stated that while he was satisfied with three children and does not desire more, it is

likely that he will expand his family size. “I was fine with three. But I can’t take that away from my wife because she didn’t have kids before. She wants a daughter” (158).

Three fathers reported the desire for a larger family. A father of two stated, “I want more, four would be good” (156). A father of twelve children stated, “I don’t think I have enough kids. I think my fiancée and I will have kids” (165). Another father reported that if his situation had been different, he would have chosen to have more kids. “If I wouldn’t have went to prison, I’d have way more children. I would have loved to have a bigger family” (162).

After considering family structure and size, it is also important to examine the dynamics of the relationship between the father and the children’s mother(s). Dynamics with children’s mother(s) was the next most frequently discussed subcategory.

Dynamics with children’s mother(s). The quality of the relationship between the father and the children’s mother(s) is another important aspect to consider. Thirteen fathers discussed the quality of their relationship with children’s mothers. Some fathers described positive aspects to these relationships, where for others it was primarily negative. For many fathers, it was a combination of the two. In seven cases, there was overlap between positive and challenging aspects of their relationship with children’s mothers.

Problematic aspects. Eleven of the fathers identified relationship challenges with one or more mothers of their children. These included general problems as well as arguing in front of the children (n=2); infidelity (n=2); and unwillingness to share photos of the children (n=2).

Two fathers noted relationship issues that existed since their children were newborns. One father stated that these relationship problems were longstanding. “Since she was a newborn her mom and I had problems” (151). One of the fathers stated, “We don’t have a good

relationship, never have” (164). Some of the fathers (n=2) lamented the changes in their relationships with their exes. One stated, “Before we were in love. Now, it’s like I’m a baby daddy” (153). Other fathers (n=3) noted a very restricted relationship with the mother(s) of their children. One father stated, “I have a nonchalant attitude with the exes, what they think doesn’t matter to me. I didn’t engage in their nonsense” (158). Another stated, “I try to limit contact with her because of her personality; we clash, can be conflictual sometimes” (155).

Some fathers (n=4) thought that their exes tried to retaliate against them either through restricting visits or not sharing photos of the children. One father stated, “Every time her mom got upset with me she used the child against me by saying I couldn’t see her” (151). A father of seven stated, “She tries to get back at me” (152). Another stated, “She thinks she can control me since she has physical custody” (158). Another father who could not see his daughter for a year reported, “I would ask for pictures, she only sent a few” (157).

Of those fathers who felt their ex attempted to retaliate, three had an incarceration history. Three of the four fathers had children with three different mothers; each of these fathers had four or more children. Two of the four fathers had substance abuse challenges and the same two had mental health issues.

Some fathers (n=5) noted that there was arguing in front of the children and generally unhealthy relationships between themselves and their exes. “Our relationship was horrible. Turmoil. It was bad” (159). Another stated, “I tried to make it work for the kids, but through the months it wasn’t working and became more hostile than healthy” (164). A father of one child reported that his relationship with his child’s mother escalated to the point that she would follow him around the house saying, “Why are you alive; you’re useless; go kill yourself” (157).

Intimate partner violence. IPV was an issue for the majority of the participants. Ten fathers reported that there was some level of physical violence between him and one or more of the children's mothers. Two fathers who described no physical violence reported, however, that there were verbal arguments. Four fathers reported no violence in their relationships with children's mothers. In some cases, the fathers recounted that there was violence in one or more relationships, but this did not mean that all of their relationships had been violent. One father stated that the only relationship where there had been violence was "with third wife" (152).

In all ten cases, fathers asserted that at least one of their children's mothers was violent with him. One participant said, "She initiated the violence. She threw a remote at me, a wine glass, cut my throat with a knife, punched me" (154). Another stated, "She tried to run me and the kids over with a truck, she only got 15 days for malicious wounding" (152). Another father reported, "Second mother cut me, we both got locked up. She stabbed me another time, but I didn't press charges" (165).

Some of the fathers (n=6) admitted that they were violent with their partners. "Me and my wife got to arguing, she dashed boiling water on me; she was holding our 6-month old when I slapped her. The neighbor heard and called police" (151). Another father stated, "She tried to step on my throat once when I was sleeping. I got up and hit her. I told her I was sorry. But told her she can't do that" (161). Another father reported that in one situation he had been violent, "She smacked me and I smacked her back. She called the police. She admitted she was wrong. If you're going to hit a man, you need to understand he might hit you back" (158).

Of the six fathers who admitted to perpetrating IPV, all six had been incarcerated at some point. Four of these fathers had experienced issues with substance abuse. Another subset of four fathers experienced mental health challenges. Two of the six were young fathers.

Some of the fathers (n=3) indicated an understanding of the impact of this violence on their children. One father admitted that his children saw him and his ex “acting a fool; it was like the world paused and I looked at their face and saw fear. I don’t want my kids to be scared of me” (153). Another father who had not seen his daughter for a year reported, “When I was able to see my daughter again, she acted out with stuffed animals some of the fights she witnessed. I talked to her about it” (157).

In many cases, IPV was perpetrated by both fathers and mothers. There was a great deal of overlap between those who noted negative aspects of the relationship and those who noted positive aspects. Since the overlap was so high, it was not possible to distinguish elements of the individual profile for the two groups. Seven of the nine fathers who noted positives aspects of the relationship also noted negative aspects.

Positive aspects. While fathers noted challenging aspects of these relationships, they noted positive aspects as well. Nine of the fathers reported some positive aspects in their relationships with one or more of their children’s mothers. In one case, a current relationship that had experienced significant problems was enhanced through counseling. “We finally went to counseling and worked it out” (163). Three of the fathers said they are very close with their child’s mother. One father expressed admiration and respect for his wife who managed the household and kids for eight years while he was in prison. He stated, “We’ve been together 23 years. Even today, she’s the love of my life... She held our family together when my life wasn’t

going well” (162). Regarding his relationship with his wife, another father responded, “our relationship flourishes” (164).

It is important to note that for the fathers participating in this study, one father may be co-parenting with up to five different mothers. The relationships with each child’s mother varied in quality with some being perceived to be more positive than others. One father who co-parents with three mothers stated, “I get along with all of them, except the last” (152). Another stated that his relationship with his youngest child’s mom is stronger than his other co-parenting relationship, “We have a better relationship (than with oldest child’s mom)” (164).

Some fathers (n=4) do not have a close relationship with their ex, yet work to maintain a positive co-parenting relationship. “We’re not the best of friends, but she’s his mother and I respect her” (155). Another father stated, “We don’t see eye to eye...we let stuff go now” (153). One father who has seven children by five different mothers stated, “I will walk away rather than argue. There’s no stress (between the moms and me). They have never gotten in the way of me seeing the kids” (160). One of the fathers is a part of important events that take place in his ex’s home. “I will go to her house for the kids’ birthdays” (153).

Child support. Child support also impacted father’s relationships with children’s mothers. Five of the fathers commented on child support and it was identified as a source of conflict by four of the fathers. “There were always issues about money. Even though he (son) lived with me for nine months and I paid child support, she wanted to claim him on her income tax report. She wanted the money but not the son” (164). One father stated that he has not been able to give his children’s mother much money lately and this has become a source of conflict.

I had the kids a lot and I haven't been working and she's been okay with it until now. If I don't have the money, I don't have it. Once I give her money, she'll text me and make sure I'm okay. (153)

Ability and willingness to pay child support were not always issues. One father stated, "I don't mind paying child support. I always take care of my kids: I'm not doing anything different. I was paying more when I had custody" (158). A father of two stated, "I pay child support and then I ask if they need anything extra for school supplies or something else" (155).

Other fathers reported concerns regarding the apparent unfairness with the DSS system. One father reported that his child's mother had moved away and his child was living with him, yet he was still paying child support. "I paid child support the first four years, even though she (child's mom) was out of the picture" (156). Another father noted that when his kids lived with him, he had to fight to receive child support, yet when his children lived with their mother, he was immediately pursued. "I had to fight for her to pay child support. I had to look up law codes myself and show them to the judge. Judge saw I was right and she had to pay \$65 a month. They came after me right away for me to pay" (158).

Child support was identified as a challenge for fathers in this study. Fathers also discussed various challenges experienced by their children's mother(s) that impacted their fathering. These included mothers' mental health issues, substance abuse, and health problems.

Challenges experienced by children's mother(s). Another area that seemed to shape the quality of the relationship with children's mothers was the challenges that the mothers themselves faced. Eight of the fathers reported that she had challenges which impacted herself or others. These fathers had children with between one and five mothers. The distribution of

number of mothers is as follows: one mother (n=2), two mothers (n=1), three mothers (n=4), five mothers (n=1). These eight fathers had children with 21 mothers, ten of whom were reported to have challenges. Types of challenges experienced by these mothers included mental health concerns (n=4), substance abuse (n=4), and health issues (n=2). One father noted, “This mother tries, but comes up short so often” (164). Another father stated, “I think my third wife didn’t have the emotional attachment to her family or to her kids” (152).

Some of the mental health issues experienced by the four mothers were addressed while others went untreated. The issues included depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder. One father reported that after the birth of their fifth child, “She had postpartum depression” (152). Another stated, “I think she was depressed. Maybe she was lonely...She has bipolar disorder” (160). Two married fathers noted that when their wife is struggling with mental health issues, it impacts their own behavior and emotional state. One father noted that he works harder when his wife struggles with depression. “I fight harder when she’s depressed. She shuts down when she’s depressed, she can’t function” (162). “When my wife is stressed, it makes me stressed. I think my wife has mental health issues, but she does not want to claim it. She isn’t ready to address the situation” (164).

Substance abuse issues were experienced by four of the children’s mothers. When referring to the mother of some of his children one father stated, “(She) has a drug habit. The police found Xanax, Percocet in her house but nothing happened to her” (165). Further, he stated “Because of her drug use, I had to stay in the house all day. I wouldn’t leave the kids alone (knowing she was using and may not be watching them).” Another father stated, “The youngest kids mom got into drugs but she’s a really good mom. She has a substance abuse issue, and I didn’t even know about it” (160). Another father reported, “I had no idea my ex would think of

using heroin. Heroin and cocaine are still going on” (157). Substance abuse also impacted the children’s living arrangements. Drug use siphoned the mother’s money from the rent and resulted in one family being evicted, “She was four months late on rent even though she had the money (coming in from social security)” (165).

Health challenges were experienced by two mothers. The more serious health problems experienced by the children’s mothers included stroke, heart surgery, and diabetes. One of the mothers experienced diabetes and a stroke. “When I came home (from prison), she had a stroke” (162). Another father reported that he has to work more because his significant other is unable to work due to her health issues. “She wants to work but can’t due to health problems. She had spinal surgery and heart surgery” (156).

In addition to individual challenges experienced by children’s mother(s), communication challenges with them were also mentioned by eight fathers. While the frequency was the same for both areas, mother’s challenges were reported first because fathers seemed to think that these challenges might be impacting father/mother communication as well.

Communication with children’s mothers. Eight fathers discussed positive and negative aspects of communication with the mother(s) of their children. Three fathers recognized the importance of positive communication with the mother of their children. One father of three reported, “We talk about raising kids a lot” (161). Another noted, “Whoever you’re with, you’ve got to have communication” (154). A third father noted that the communication between himself and his wife improved through counseling.

Poor communication. Five of the fathers who were interviewed reported significant communication issues with the mother(s) of their children. These included poor communication

and lack of communication. In some cases fathers seemed to think that communication with their children's mother was optional, with little sense of the negative impact it may have on the children. "She got upset when I didn't call the day before school started, she texted me. I didn't text her back; I just called him the next day as I planned. I don't have to talk to the moms. If they aren't cordial, I don't need to" (158). Another stated, "The only communication I have with ex is through text" (157). Another father reported, "Me and her (ex) don't talk. I don't have anything to say to her" (156).

Two of these fathers noted that communication between themselves and their children's mothers had gone past simply conflictual. One was concerned for the safety of his wife and children.

I kept their (exes) emails, text messages, recorded the phone conversations. I was threatened by our oldest kids' mom's friend. I have it recorded. She had to pay a fine. I didn't take it seriously, but at the same time, I have kids. I don't know what you are going to do. (158)

Another father commented on the way he treated his former wife, "I called her names, said mean things. I didn't used to think that was as bad. By calling her names, I didn't realize it would affect the children" (152).

Paternity. An aspect of problematic communication involved paternity. Some of the fathers who participated (n=4) received no communication or incorrect communication regarding the paternity of one or more of their children. Questions surrounding paternity were a challenge for these fathers. In some cases, they did not know that a child was their child until months or years after the child was born. "I got a paternity test with my middle daughter. They're all mine,

thank goodness” (159). “I didn’t think my youngest was mine until he was born and looked just like me” (153). One father was told by his ex that a child was not his. Several years later, a paternity test revealed that he was this man’s biological child, “It was an adjustment for him when he learned I was his father” (158). Regarding another one of his children he stated,

She (ex) has another child. I thought he was mine, when he was 2 ½ years old, I found out he wasn’t mine. When I confronted her about him not being my child, she got furious and I had to go back and forth to court. (158)

Paternity issues had ramifications for other family members as well. After learning that a child was not his biologically, “I had to tell my mom to stop contact with him because I didn’t want it to interfere with my new relationship. It was very difficult for me and my current wife and my mother” (158).

Positive communication. Three fathers noted the importance of good communication. One stated, “Whoever you’re with (in a relationship), you’ve got to have communication” (154). Another father who went to counseling to improve his relationship with his wife stated, “My wife and I talked about the issues and now we are better. We learned so much about each other. Laughter, communication, trust; these have to be in any relationship with others and yourself” (163). Of the three noting positive communication, one is married and the other two are currently single.

Regrets. Six fathers verbalized regrets about their relationships with their children’s mothers. Three fathers stated they wish they had chosen different partners. One stated, “I love my daughter to death, but wish she had a different mother. I don’t regret my daughter, but regret her mother” (156). Another father stated, “I wish I could have chosen different females to have

kids with” (165). A father of seven stated, “If I could change it, I’d have all of my kids with one woman” (160). Two fathers reported that they wished their communication had been better. For example,

I wish I would have had more communication with their mother, listened more...Maybe if I would have talked more to her she wouldn’t have been on chat lines texting other men... I wish I would have listened and communicated more. (154)

Fathers recognize their relationships with the mothers of his children are significant. Not only do these relationships impact the parents, but they also affect their children. Just as was true for their fathers the children see behaviors modeled and learn from them, with positive and negative results. The nature of the parents’ relationship may also impact the father’s relationship with the child, including where the child lives, how often the father can see the child, and a father’s expectations of their child.

Father’s Relationships with His Children

These fathers have different relationships with each of his children. It appears the father impacts the child and the child impacts the father. Child factors such as illness, disability, and gender were seen as important to these fathers. Additionally, these relationships change over time, given differing living arrangements, age and development of the child, and whether abuse or neglect have occurred. The following subcategories impacting a father’s relationship to his children will be discussed in order of their frequency: living arrangements; involvement with children; risk-taking behaviors; child specific factors; abuse and neglect; understanding children’s relationships with others; father’s fit with child; expectations; and putting kids first.

Living arrangements. All fifteen fathers interviewed commented on their children's living arrangements. There was significant variation in living arrangements for children. More importantly, there was a great deal of fluidity. Children may move from one household to another over the course of a summer or a year or may stay with one parent for several years and then go to live with the other parent. They may live with either parent, or with grandparents or family friends, and in some cases, foster care. One father expressed regret about living apart from his children, "I wish we all lived together all the time. I didn't expect it to be like this" (155). Some fathers, who do not reside with their children, still see them regularly. One noted, "I don't live with the kids, but we don't live far from each other" (153). Two fathers have children who currently live in another state.

Currently, nine of the fathers have one or more children who reside with them. One father stated, "After we broke up, all my kids came to live under my roof because I am selfish and wanted to be sure they received my morals and were taught right" (152). Seven fathers reported that currently one or more of their children reside with others, either in foster care, grandparents, or with the child's mother.

Fluctuations in living arrangements occurred for a variety of reasons. In some cases, CPS was involved and stated that the children could no longer live with one or both parents. In these situations, the child often went to live with a grandparent or was placed in foster care. One father whose daughter is currently living with her grandparents due to the CPS investigation stated, "My oldest has been out of the house this year. I want her back home, hopefully soon" (156). Another father reported that six of his children went into foster care due to their mother's substance abuse issues. A father of four stated, "The foster parents take care of them, but aren't going to love them like I do. I'll do whatever (is needed) to get my kids" (160).

Sometimes when parents split up, they divided the children. “I moved into my mama’s in September, me and the kids, she had the 4, 5, and 12-year old, I had the rest” (165). In other cases, the child expressed a preference for living elsewhere. “My girls are living with their grandmother when their mom is in Germany, by choice. One wanted to live with me and one wanted to live with grandmother, but I didn’t want to separate them” (159). At times, one of the parents decided that a child was more than they could manage. “She (my ex) said our son was too difficult, so he came to live with me” (159). Another noted, “When she didn’t want to be a mom, she wanted me there. She would say she needed a break. But there’s no break when you’re a parent” (164).

Two of the fathers believed that their living arrangements did not impact their fathering. One father has seven children with five different mothers, and all of the children reside with their respective mothers. “Even if I was in the house, I would have to go to work and they would have to go to school” (160). Another father who lives with two of his kids and has two children who reside with their respective mothers stated, “I don’t think it affects my parenting” (151).

One father expressed concern about the toll living in separate states will take on his relationship with his child. Although he never lived with his two year old, he still managed to see him frequently until the child moved out of state with his mother. “Since he moved several months ago, I haven’t seen him. When his birthday comes, I will miss that. I don’t know if I’ll see him on the holidays. It makes it hard when you can’t all be together. He won’t know me like the rest of my kids do” (164).

Custody. Seven of the fathers reported that there has been difficulty surrounding custody issues. In some cases, the child’s mother limited or prevented visits. In referring to his oldest

son, one father stated, “I see him maybe three times a year. I don’t see him much; my son’s mother doesn’t let me see him much” (151). In some cases, the father desires contact but is limited in visitation by his ex. “My oldest son’s mother did not encourage me to have contact with him when he lived with her. At first she prevented me from contacting him” (164).

At times, informal custody arrangements became problematic and ended in formal custody agreements. This same father as above has a daughter with another woman who also presented difficulties with visitation and custody issues:

Months would go by and she wouldn’t let me see her (my daughter). It’s like it be up to her (child’s mom) when she want me to see her. I ended up taking her (child’s mom) to court after years went by. She (my daughter) turned 13 or 14 when I finally took her mom to court to get joint custody. Now I have joint custody but I’m still going through problems with her (child’s mom). (151)

Another father reported that his child’s mother prevented visits and phone contact between himself and his young daughter. He eventually went to court and was awarded full custody:

I had left for a while to take care of some things that were wrong with me. I planned to be gone for six months, get a job and other stuff. I didn’t get to see her (my daughter) for a year. I wouldn’t stop asking to talk to her. I wouldn’t give up. I would text or call every other day. (157)

For one father, the legal battles become too much to take.

I eventually won custody of both of them. It's a very positive thing for a man to have custody of their kids, but everything that comes with it...the bitterness, going back and forth to court, if you're married or in a relationship, them having to deal with the nonsense. I didn't want to put my kids through going to court. I decided to give up. I was willing to relinquish custody in order to have peace, stop going to court, I said forget it. (158)

Two of the fathers who do not have physical custody noted the difficulty of not seeing their children on a daily basis. "It's hard not having my older daughter live with me. I talk to her every day and see her every weekend" (156). Another stated, "When my daughter's not with me, I call at least every other day" (155).

Sometimes, the formal custody arrangement does not tell the whole story. One father who shares joint custody of his oldest child stated, "Then his mother got better and got him, we have joint custody. He stayed with me most of the summer" (155). Another stated, "Eventually we worked on agreements but they didn't last long. I ended up keeping him (oldest child) for a whole year. She's (son's mom) only seen him once in four months even though she could see him twice a month" (164).

Two of the fathers interviewed expressed regret that they did not pursue joint or full custody earlier. One father who has six children with one mother stated, "I should have filed for custody earlier" (165). Another father who pursued joint custody when his daughter was a teenager regretted that he had not done so earlier. He stated, "I was so busy running the streets I didn't take it seriously as far as taking her to court for joint visitation. I could have done a better job of that" (151).

Involvement with children. Fifteen fathers discussed their involvement with their children. Fathers described both active and minimal involvement with their kids as well as types of activities they engaged in, roles/contributions to child's care, and discipline. These elements will be discussed in their order of frequency.

Active involvement with children. All 15 fathers described themselves as being actively involved with one or more of their children. Starting from the time of their baby's birth, many of the fathers began this involvement. Six of the participants described being present for their child's birth and how important that was for them. "My daughter was the greatest gift. I watched her being born. I remember every detail. It was an immediate connection" (162). Once home from the hospital, all 15 fathers reported that they spent a great deal of time with at least some of their children when they were babies. An important exception was when fathers were incarcerated. One stated, "I rocked her to sleep, fed her, showed her colors around her..." (157). Even those who did not live with their children emphasized that they frequently spent time together. "I used to spend a lot of time with her when she was first born. I saw her 5-6 times a week" (151). Fathers reported a multitude of activities that they participate in with their children (see table 4.3).

Table 4.3	
Activities with Children	
Type	Total
Indoor Play	10
Active/Sports	9
Go to Park/Playground	7
Talk/Text/Laugh	7
Go outside/ride bikes	4
Read together	4
Watch TV/movies	4
Play Videogames	4
Go out to eat	3
Teach skills	3

As their children grew, the types of activities the fathers engaged in changed. One father of teens stated,

Teaching the oldest daughter to drive. Take the older kids out to eat, take them shopping. My 15 year old, we'll text... It's more of a financial thing now since they're teens, they don't really want to do as much with me. (159)

Most of the fathers interviewed reported feeling good about their relationship with their child and the time they spend together. Fathers identified several challenges to involvement including: mother limiting time together, conflict with children, living far apart, children in foster care, and their work schedule.

Minimal or no involvement with children. While a slight majority of the fathers interviewed were actively involved in all of their children's lives, there were exceptions. Seven

of the fathers currently had little involvement with one or more of their children. Some (n=2) of the fathers had some children who lived out of state with their mother. In these cases, the frequency of visits with children ranged from two times a month to once every several months or less. In one case, finances were a challenge to visitation. In this case, the father reported that he would call his child, but due to the child's young age, phone conversations were difficult.

Another father had an extremely conflictual custody fight with the mother of two of his children. He eventually decided not to fight for custody and is not currently able to visit with the children. "I decided to give up (custody fight). Because of this, I can't see them because she took a protective order out on me" (158). He reported that since he cannot see these children, he is choosing not to see his other child who lives with another mother. "I haven't seen younger son since I gave up custody of the older boys. I could see him, but I don't. I'm not there yet because of the situation with the other two." He viewed this as best for all involved. Other fathers (n=3) had minimal involvement because their children were in foster care, and therefore could only visit one hour per week.

Roles/contributions to children's care. When asked what they thought their main role with their children was, fathers reported a variety of roles. Often, fathers reported two or more main roles. Table 4.4 displays the frequencies cited for various roles.

Table 4.4	
Father's Roles	
Type	Count
Caretaker (cook, clean, bathe, do hair)	14
Teacher	13
Financial Provider	11
Love/Nurture	8
Listen and Talk	6
Help with School/Homework	4
Be there/spend time together	4
Protector	3
Disciplinarian	2

The majority of the roles include provision of some type of concrete service. This includes cooking, giving baths, teaching skills, providing financially, and helping with homework. Less frequently mentioned were areas focusing on nurturing or building self-esteem. One father described being initially hesitant to do some of these tasks such as changing his daughter's diaper. He stated, "I helped potty train the kids. I wasn't comfortable wiping my daughter, but I played a role potty training all three" (163). Many (n=8) of the fathers reported regularly changing diapers or braiding their daughter's hair and taking pride in their ability to perform these tasks and roles. "When my wife worked, she worked crazy hours. On Saturdays, I did her (daughter's) hair. I would do braids, curl it" (163). Several fathers noted the variety of roles they play with their children. One stated, "I do everything" (156).

Limited range of roles in children's care. While the majority of fathers played a variety of roles in caring for their children, some enacted a more restricted role. Some of the fathers saw themselves as primarily financial providers. When asked what his main role is, one father stated,

“Provider. Most importantly, being the financial provider” (158). Another responded that the most helpful thing he does for his children is, “Supporting them financially (159). Others saw their primary role as disciplinary. When asked what their main role was, two fathers responded, “Disciplinary” (155, 162).

Discipline. In addition to being asked about roles in general, fathers were asked specifically about disciplining their own children. Fathers enacted a variety of discipline techniques with their children. A total of eleven fathers discussed discipline. Both positive discipline and what could be termed inappropriate discipline were discussed. Additionally, fathers discussed limited knowledge regarding discipline skills.

Negative elements of discipline. Seven fathers discussed at least one negative element of their discipline. Two fathers reported feeling that discipline was their primary role with their children, which was an area of challenge and resentment. “Discipline was always my role. My wife was the good guy; I had to be the bad guy” (162). These fathers reported that this was a role they did not choose; rather it was thrust on them by their wives. “My wife doesn’t like discipline at all, so I’m always the bad guy” (164). This limited range in roles seemed to feel constricting and a limit to more positive interactions with their child.

For fathers who did not live with their children, the subject of correcting misbehavior and enacting discipline was a challenging one. One father acknowledged the difficulty of disciplining his children when living in a different state. “I try to overdo it sometimes to keep a good relationship since I don’t see them all the time. I try to keep everything chill. You don’t want it to be a bad experience since you won’t see them for two weeks” (159).

Fathers' knowledge of appropriate, positive discipline skills varied. One stated, "I didn't know how else to punish him (except spanking)" (163). Five of the fathers stated they have utilized physical punishment. "With a 12 year old boy, a tap on the butt isn't going to cut it, you have to get the belt" (159). Another father minimized the extent of the physical damage by noting the lightness of the child's skin coloring. He stated, "She's light skinned and bruised easily when I hit her with a belt" (156). Another father acknowledged that his physical discipline went too far, yet did not take full responsibility. "When I gave him a whipping it went too far, he got bruised. I apologized 40 million times to him. Not for whipping him, but for putting bruises on him" (163).

Positive elements of discipline. Five of the fathers interviewed demonstrated some understanding or enactment of positive discipline skills. Some reported a history of using these skills, while others reported a commitment to using them when their children were returned to their care. One father whose children were in foster care stated, "I'm never again going to put my hands on them. I will not do it (spanking) again" (154). An area that was noted by several fathers was that their significant other/wife did not like to discipline, which left the father to take on the entire disciplinary role. "She doesn't like to do it (discipline) so I do it" (164). This was an area of resentment for one father as he did not want this to be his main role.

The positive discipline skills identified included taking things away from the child and speaking calmly. "So you talk calmly to the kids. I think it's the best approach. It's the way you approach them. If you scream, they won't listen. If you threaten, they're going to do what you don't want them to do" (160). Some fathers reported that they did not spank because they themselves were not spanked as a child. "I never beat my kids because my parents never beat me when I misbehaved (165). Other fathers reported that because they were physically

punished, they made the decision not to repeat this pattern with their children. “My step-dad beating me is another reason I don’t like beating other people’s kids cuz (sic) I had another man beating me and I didn’t like it” (153). Another stated, “If I was (parenting) the way my mom raised me, my daughter definitely wouldn’t be in my care because my mom was abusive” (157).

Risk-taking behaviors. Fathers were asked how they made decisions regarding letting their child try new, potentially risky behaviors such as climbing a tree, going on a bigger slide at the playground or playing on monkey bars. They were also asked the reasoning behind their decisions. Fourteen fathers commented on risk-taking behaviors.

Encouraging healthy or appropriate risk-taking. Nine fathers reported that they encourage appropriate and healthy risk-taking. Seven fathers reported that allowing appropriate risk-taking was important for the child’s learning. “I think they develop motor skills and intelligence from trying new things, within reason” (154). He continued, “I let them explore, be inquisitive, see what they can do.” Other benefits fathers identified included allowing children to explore, enhance motor skills and coordination, and that it provided opportunities for exploration. “I can’t hover. I let them explore and see what they can do” (164). Fathers also stressed the importance of teaching their children how to do something that might be a little scary so that the child would later know how to do it correctly and safely. “In my type of work, construction, you take risks, climb ladders. You let them (your kids) try with help. Not let them do it by themselves. It’s a learning process, it’s how they learn” (160). Another father stated that if he teaches his daughter how to try new things and how to comfort herself, then “when she starts daycare or school, then she has a guideline for certain things” (157).

Discouraging healthy or appropriate risk-taking. Many of the fathers determined whether or not to let a child engage in a riskier behavior by determining the child's ability and the potential harm involved. However, some of the participants curtailed exploration and risk-taking without consideration of potential risks and benefits. Four fathers in this study discouraged risk-taking behaviors. In some cases this seemed related to the father's anxiety and how a potential fall or injury would impact him. One stated, "I believe I am too overprotective. I can't stand them getting hurt. I don't want her to fall. If I see her fall, it will destroy me, I can't stand that" (159). Another father stated, "I'm very, very cautious with my kids. It kills me for a kid to hurt their face or another part of their body" (153). In other cases, it was related to his belief that CPS would blame him for any injury and the need to prevent potential accusations. "Normally I would let them take small risks, so she could learn on her own. But now since social services is involved, I don't want them to have marks and have them (CPS) accuse me of doing it" (156). This was seconded by another father who stated, "CPS might think I hurt them (my kids) if I let them engage in riskier behaviors" (165).

Child specific factors. Fourteen of the fathers interviewed reported specific factors related to the child as challenges to fathering. Considering unique aspects of each child seemed to impact the way fathers responded to their children. These factors included illness or disability, gender of the child, behavioral issues, age and personality.

Illness or disability. One area of challenge was illness or disability of a child. Ten fathers reported that one or more of their children suffered from a disability or serious illness. These include Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), asthma, hemophilia, Shaken Baby Syndrome, depression, and a crushed jawbone at birth. Fathers noted that these illnesses had an impact on the way they related to the child as well as affected them personally, "My son

has depression. It makes me feel bad. I feel like he's just a kid, he shouldn't have to go through it" (151).

Six fathers were managing physical conditions of their children. "My boy was born premature and had a cleft palette. They operated when he was 1-year old. It was a challenge feeding him for the first year, but I went through it, fed him, he was a good healthy baby" (160). Another father's son had a seizure, "He spent 42 days in the hospital. The fever kept coming back" (152). Another participant learned that his daughter was injured during delivery. "When my daughter was born they used forceps and crushed her jawbone" (165).

Three fathers found themselves needing to advocate for special or needed care for their child. "I didn't want them to do surgery on her face (due to crushed jawbone) because it would leave marks. I requested a retainer" (165). Another father has a child with hemophilia and found himself at odds with the child's mother regarding treatment. "I had to fight with his mom who is a Jehovah's Witness so he could get blood transfusions and treatments he needed" (152).

There were unanticipated consequences of the child's illness for some of these fathers and their children. One father whose baby suffered from Shaken Baby Syndrome noted that it changed the way he interacted with the child. "I hold the baby more than I held my older kids, just because I know what happened. It made me closer to him" (164). The father whose son has hemophilia and has another child who experienced a seizure noted the impact on their relationship, "These (illnesses) drew me closer to them" (152).

Five fathers reported having a child with ADHD. "A couple years ago he had trouble paying attention, talking, due to ADHD; he takes meds for it, it helps him" (155). "My youngest has ADHD. He's on medication. I don't believe in overmedicating because he's a child. He

needs to learn to focus. Sometimes we're going to work on things without the pills" (163).

Another father whose son is diagnosed with ADHD reports "I don't give him the medicine" (165).

Gender. Nine of the fathers discussed the impact of a child's gender on their fathering. Eight fathers reported treating their children differently due to gender, while an additional father noted his fear of raising girls. "A girl you don't want anything to hurt them, you want to be there...you feel like you want to protect them more" (159). Another father stated, "I'm tougher with my son" (161). Another participant noted, "I treat them differently...I'm more strict on the girls" (165).

Dating was perceived by several fathers as a scary, worrisome time in relation to their daughters. "With my daughters, the challenges I perceive is when they get older, the boys" (154). "I'll have to learn how to deal with a girl as a father without being too overprotective. Dating seems scary" (155). Another father stated, "Everything else (except daughter's dating) comes naturally to me" (152).

Some concerns focused on challenges and differences in raising a girl, since their personal experience is as a boy. "I can relate to boys" (164). "When a boy does something, it doesn't surprise me" (159). "I'm scared to raise a girl. I don't know if I'm cut out for it, I really don't" (158). While some concerns were more pragmatic, "If I had a girl, I couldn't braid their hair" (164).

Behavioral issues. Seven of the fathers identified behavioral issues for one or more of their children. These included, lying, aggression, cursing, hiding homework and threatening a teacher, "He had a behavioral problem at one point, he was kicked out of daycare, he would hit

his friends. I was at my wits end” (164). Another father commented on his son’s behavior problems at school and home,

He hides his homework because he doesn’t want to do it. They bring home a sheet with smiley, straight and sad faces. He won’t bring it to us when it has a straight or sad face.

He’ll say he was good, then I look at the paperwork from the teacher to find out. (161)

Another father reported that his son had threatened a teacher, “He got suspended from school for 10 days, suspended for four days before that. He told the teacher he was going to blow her head off with my gun” (163).

Age and personality. Five fathers also identified specific issues related to the child’s age and personality that created challenges. “My son (12 years old) is difficult because of his age, thinks he knows everything” (155). Some age related issues were developmental. “Right now my two-year old is easier because the ten-month old is teething, she cries all day” (151). Fathers attributed some of the challenges they experienced to the child’s personality. “My son is more stubborn than my daughters are. He’s a little more bullheaded...(162). Another stated, “He stole candy from me. He’s in the corner crying. I talked to him, but he has a temper tantrum. He’s very sensitive” (153).

Abuse/neglect. Twelve of the fathers in this study were involved with CPS due to suspected or substantiated abuse or neglect of one or more of their children, either by themselves or their partner. Fathers commented on abuse and neglect in their own situation as well as what they believe causes abuse and neglect for others in society. Fathers reported a variety of factors which they felt contributed to abuse and neglect in society. The majority (n=9) thought it was “a person’s upbringing, the way they were raised.” The next most common explanation given was

drugs (n=5). Stress comprised the third stated contributor (n=4). Others factors given included mental health issues (n=4), relationship problems (n=3), and lack of parenting knowledge and discipline skills (n=2).

Of the fathers interviewed who were involved with CPS due to physical abuse of their child, none believed that they had abused their child. Four of the fathers stated that they did not agree with the definition of abuse and/or did not think they had abused their child. “To me abuse is a black eye or leaving marks where you aren’t supposed to spank a child” (156). One stated, “I believe in spanking and the social services system doesn’t believe in the level of spanking I believe in” (159). Another father who left bruises on his daughter stated, “I used a belt to spank her. I used a belt and it was wrong, but I don’t agree with the abuse title. I don’t think I abused her” (156). Thus, even when fathers were willing to acknowledge their mistake in using a belt, they were resistant to the act being labeled abuse. Two other fathers were also involved due to physical abuse, but it was not clear if they had caused the injuries. One father’s baby experienced Shaken Baby Syndrome, which he denied committing. Another father admitted that he had previously confessed to hurting his child, but stated he had lied to protect someone else.

Looking outside their own experience, two fathers spoke of seeing neglect regularly in their neighborhood. They reported seeing young children who were unsupervised. One participant stated, “I see neglect every day that I walk out the door” (153). While another said, “Where we live, I see kids her age (preschoolers) wandering around unsupervised” (157).

Two of the fathers were involved with CPS allegedly due to issues primarily related to their wife or girlfriend. One father whose wife stayed home with their young children reported that she had a serious drug addiction of which he was unaware. He reported that he was

involved with CPS due to “her substance abuse (heroin). It’s silent. You can’t see it... I never saw it personally” (160). Another father’s girlfriend stayed home raising their four young children while he travelled extensively for work. He initially stated that their CPS situation was completely the fault of his girlfriend. He said,

She called CPS, told them she was overwhelmed, couldn’t finish her schoolwork, was afraid she would hurt the kids. Because she wanted to be with a boy who worked part time at Walmart rather than being with the father of her kids...Maybe if I would have talked more to her she wouldn’t have been on chat lines/texting other men. (154)

Maltreatment of a child impacts a child and the father’s relationship with the child. Additional factors seemed important for these fathers to consider. The extent to which a father understands his children’s relationships with others was another element for consideration.

Understanding children’s relationships with others. The children of these fathers live with people in addition to their fathers, including mothers, step-mothers and siblings. Twelve fathers discussed their children’s relationships with others. It seemed necessary for these fathers to understand the types and significance of these relationships to their children. They seemed to realize these relationships can impact the child and the child’s relationship with their father and that as fathers they could impact the quality of these relationships.

Children’s relationships with their biological mother. Nine fathers commented on relationship issues between their children and their mothers. These included concerns with the type and quality of the relationship, lack of consistency and involvement. One father noted that the children’s mother was nurturing. “My wife teaches them songs and little hand games” (164).

One father reported that he hurt his older children’s relationship with their mother:

With my older boys I was so strict and didn't want them to be weak and taught them they didn't need to listen to their mom ... Their respect for their mother went away. I damaged the kids because I thought I didn't need a woman for anything. (152)

Two fathers noted that their child's mother was inconsistent. "She (mom #4) would leave for a year or so then come back and try to reestablish a relationship. My girls long for motherly affection" (152). Another father reported that while his son's mother was stationed overseas, he went long periods between seeing or talking to her. "He missed his mom who was in Germany. He hadn't talked to her in a year and a half" (159).

Some (n=2) fathers noted that their child's relationship with their mother is more friend-like than parental. "She's more like a best friend, I'm like a Dad" (153). One father who spent eight years in prison returned home and has had difficulty in his relationship with his son. "I think it (his bitterness) was because their mom was very lenient, more of a best friend than a mom" (162). Two fathers reported that their children do not refer to their mother as 'mom.' "My oldest calls her mom by her first name" (156). The other father stated that while his child was living with his mother, "The six year-old didn't have a routine, no consistency, no love. He was calling his mother's cousin 'mommy'" (158).

Two fathers noted they have intervened in the relationship between their children and their mother. In one case, it was positive. "I will get between my kids and their mom and make peace, tell the kids to be respectful" (159). The other situation was harmful to the relationship. "I played games with the older children (regarding their mom)" (152).

Children's relationship with their step-mothers. In this section, the term "step-mother" will be used to refer to the father's partner, whether or not the father is married to her. Five

fathers spoke about the relationship between their children and their step-mother. While one father described a negative relationship, the majority of the fathers noted a positive relationship between their child and the child's stepmother.

"My oldest daughter talks to my wife more than to me about her problems. I'm glad she will at least tell somebody" (151). Another stated, "My girlfriend has been with me since my oldest was four. We've been together six years. She's been my oldest daughter's mother. She and my oldest are close" (156). One father reports that his daughter's mother is not involved in her life, but she has a close relationship with her step-mother; the step-mother's father was also uninvolved when she was growing up. "I think that's why she (my wife) gets along so well with my oldest. They both wondered about the parent that wasn't involved" (163).

Another father who has been with his wife for many years shared concerns about his wife's relationship with his children. "My wife has no relationship at all with my kids. Even when my son lived with us (there was no relationship)" (159). He did not seem to think these relationships were likely to improve.

Children's relationships with their siblings. Five of the fathers discussed sibling relationships. Four of the fathers commented on the close bond between their children. A father of seven kids noted, "My kids are awesome, all of them...They all get along" (160). Another father returned from eight years in prison, at which point his three children were teenagers. He and his wife had another child, which he felt has been a bonding experience for the family. "My two-year old became the focal point for all of us. She seemed to bring us all together" (162).

Three of the fathers commented on the adjustments children experience in regard to their siblings. One such adjustment is when one or more siblings go into foster care or a relative

placement while others remain at home. One father stated that since his oldest child went to live with her grandmother due to CPS issues, it has been difficult on his youngest child. “My youngest daughter really misses her (older sister)” (156). Another father who cannot currently see his children due to a protective order commented on the effect it may have on his children who have different mothers. “I want them to grow up with each other. I don’t care about my feelings. It matters that he (child 3) knows he has brothers” (158). In another family, the younger children had difficulty adjusting when the older child’s moved away due to military service. “He couldn’t call his brother (in the military), we hadn’t heard from him at all, he was on a special mission...His brother and sister idolize him” (163).

Father’s fit with child. The concept of “fit” reflects how well the father is able to understand and respond to the unique temperament of each child. When there is a good fit, the father has empathy and is responsive to that child, providing what the child needs. When there is a poor fit, the father either expects children to all react in the same way, or is not responsive to the unique needs of each child. In this study, the father’s relationships with his children was further interrogated in an effort to answer the last of the research questions concerning the father’s perceptions regarding a good or poor fit between himself and his children.

Good fit with child. Eleven of the fathers recognized similar qualities in themselves and their children that they felt were neutral or positive. These included appearance, personality, and interests. A father of five stated, “My three youngest look just like me. They can dance and sing like me...” (153). A father of four stated, “They do things like me. I can see it in their personalities” (159). Another father noted that his daughter, “Got my sense of humor” (155).

Three fathers noted that their children have similar qualities to themselves that they felt were negative. “All of the kids have my attitude, their temper will flare and when they want something they want it right now” (154). Another father who described himself as arrogant stated, “My 3-year old picked it up. She’s the same way and I don’t think it’s a good thing” (152). A father of four was concerned that two of his children have his temper. “My oldest daughter and 2-year old, their attitude. They get upset quickly...It bothers me, I don’t want them to grow up to be quick- tempered like me” (151).

Ten fathers recognized differences between themselves and their children. These included different interests, personality, and willingness to help. One father stated, “My son is not an outdoors person like I was” (155). A father of four stated, “My 5-year old and 8-year old are very caring. I wasn’t like that at that age. My baby is always smiling, that’s not me” (158). Another father noted how helpful his son is stating, “I didn’t ask to make my own bed when I was four. He helps my wife wash the dishes, is willing to help out, that’s something I never wanted to do” (164).

As part of working towards fit, six of the fathers interviewed recognized that each child is unique, with their own personality. One father stated, “As I got older, I realized that everyone is different and you need to recognize that. You have to adjust. He learns on the run, so we have to teach him on the run. He’s not going to sit there and listen” (163). Another father noted, “I don’t judge my children, I treat them each individually based on their age, strengths” (162). A father of two noted the challenges in discerning each child’s temperament. “Just learning about how they are. The girls are different from each other. Trying to figure them out. I just take it that they have their own personalities” (156).

Poor fit with child. Five of the fathers described a potentially poor fit between themselves and one or more of their children. One father who described himself as calm and quiet stated, “In public, they’re loud and obnoxious. It’s hard to deal with. Sometimes I can’t be myself with them, so it does impact the relationship” (159). Other issues which some fathers struggled with included a child’s shyness when they were outgoing; stubbornness, sensitivity, and general personality traits that they did not appreciate or understand.

Expectations. The father’s expectations of their children were explored in an effort to better understand how these might impact the relationship quality with each child. Nine fathers discussed expectations of their children. A variety of expectations emerged ranging from appropriate to unrealistic.

Appropriate expectations. Eight fathers discussed what they saw as appropriate expectations they have for their children. The two that were mentioned most frequently were: following family rules and structure and finishing school. A father of four stated,

Most people expect young black kids to be locked up, dropped out of school, out of control. Statistically, none of them should have good grades. I take pride in being the father that says, ‘No, you’re not going to be that statistic.’ (163)

Fathers also mentioned the importance of respect; participation in family activities; being honest; earning privileges; and exhibiting kindness toward siblings. One father stated, “I teach my kids to save money and encourage them to buy for everyone (other siblings), not just yourself” (160).

Unrealistic expectations. Two participants verbalized inaccurate or unrealistic expectations of their children. One father with young children assumed that his children will do what he wants them to do. He stated, “If you have a bond with your kids, and they trust you,

they will believe you and do what you think is right” (154). Another father stressed, “I like order and structure and cleanness” (164). He has three children and this expectation was a cause of stress and disharmony in the family. He also had unrealistic expectations regarding holding young children. “I don’t like to hold babies because then they always want to be held. My philosophy is once you learn how to walk; I’m not picking you up unless I need to” (164).

Put kids first. Five fathers commented on the importance of prioritizing their children. This relates to buying things for children rather than for self; valuing children; and doing whatever is needed. “I’ll go without so they can have what they need” (156). Another father stated, “Now, the kids would get something new before I would” (164). This prioritizing goes beyond what can be purchased to really being there for their kids. “My children are more important to me than I am. I care about them more than I care about myself” (162). Another father stated, “When it comes to my kids, I’m there, I will fight for my kids and they know this. Anything for the kids, I’m there” (160). One father summarized his feelings by stating, “I love my children. I tell them I’ll do the impossible for them” (162).

The preceding four categories together comprise that which leads to acceptable fathering. Through examination of the previous categories, it is possible to determine what appears to impact one’s ability to achieve “acceptable fathering,” the core and final category in this study. Included in the discussion that follows are elements or dimensions of acceptable fathering and elements or capabilities that facilitate this fathering, including support, managing challenges, and managing resources.

Acceptable Fathering

Acceptable fathering encompasses what fathers need to do and satisfactorily manage in order to meet an adequate standard of fathering. Based on constant comparative analysis, four subcategories emerged that comprise the acceptable fathering category. In order of descending frequency, the categories are: elements of acceptable fathering, support, managing challenges, and managing resources.

Elements of acceptable fathering. The fathers interviewed displayed a range of strengths in fathering. All 15 fathers were able to identify one or more strengths in their fathering. When asked to describe their strengths fathers stated: being loving and nurturing, protective, patient, a good provider, playing with the child, and emphasizing the importance of education. A father of seven responded that his strengths include, “I am loving, nurturing, caring. I always wanted to take care of people, animals; I’m a caretaker” (152). One father reported that his strengths include, “I’m a good provider. I’m not lazy, I get up and go to work. Whatever is needed, I’m there. I’m a very good provider” (160). A father of two children noted that his strengths were, “Quality time, fun” (155). Another father reported that his strengths were, “I’m flexible and easygoing. But, when it comes to my rules, teaching my kids that their only job is school, I don’t bend on that” (162).

Overwhelmingly, the fathers described fathering as “fun” and “enjoyable.” Twelve of the participants explicitly stated how much they enjoyed being a Dad. One father stated that being a father is “the best challenge I’ve ever experienced” (157). Another stated that being a father is “The best thing. I enjoy every minute” (152).

These fathers’ strengths were not always recognized even by them. Throughout the process of this project, it became clear that although these fathers had significant challenges, they

often had multiple strengths as well. The emergence of this core category was possible due to the participants' insights regarding how each in their own way built on their support system, their ability to manage challenges, and their ability to manage resources.

Support. Fathering does not occur in a vacuum. In addition to the mother of their child, fathers in this project received/accepted assistance and support from one or more additional persons. Fathers identified receiving support from parenting partners, a social network, and their spiritual beliefs.

Parenting partners. Twelve of the fathers had parenting partners. These were family members or friends (beyond the other biological parent) who assist them in caring for their children. Most commonly, parenting partners were family members: father's mother (n=8), father's siblings (n=4), father's mother-in-law (n=3), father's aunts/uncles (n=3). These parenting partners helped in a variety of ways, including watching children; buying needed items; cooking; and doing children's hair. In some cases, these parenting partners took custody of the children to avoid their entering the foster care system.

One father noted the important role his mother has played. "My mom has always helped with the kids. She helped with (buying) shoes, diapers, if I couldn't get them at the time" (164). When asked about parenting partners, a father of four stated, "Yes, her (my wife's) brothers and sisters, my siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles. We have a lot of family that offers advice, a hand...I had an excellent support system with my parents and my sister" (163). A father of two noted, "My mom and grandma got my back 100%. From the time my daughter was five; my mom and grandma were her mom. My mother moved down here to take care of my daughter so she wasn't placed with her mom" (156). A father of twelve noted that his sisters and mom have

been instrumental in helping him care for his kids. “My mom and sisters have always been supportive. My sisters do the kids hair; take them to the bus stop if I can’t. They’ll cook meals if I can’t” (165).

Social supports. Six fathers noted the importance of a strong social network. Fathers shared that a social support system provided friendship, support, information and resources. One father who strongly valued his social supports noted a variety of information and resources they had provided to him and his family. “When my daughter had Hand, Foot, and Mouth (disease), a friend told me that was probably what she had. They (my friends) give me clothes for her. They gave me names of lawyers” (159). They also provided companionship and support. “All the guys I work with are married and have kids. We talk about our kids all the time, every day. I show the guys videos of my (baby) daughter” (159). This is in stark contrast to when he was raising his older children. “With my older kids, there was nobody else with kids, nobody. I was the only one in the group.”

A father of four noted that he and his wife are part of a close knit group of friends that offer companionship and support. “This little circle of friends that we’ve had since 1996. We had that group and would do cookouts, play cards. We would do things and bring the kids” (163). Another father noted that the size of the support network is not as important as its quality. “I only have two friends. I’ve had the same friends for five year. It’s another outlet” (158).

One father stated that he wished he had more social supports. When asked what he felt he needed, he stated,

A group of dads who are similar and trying to do their best. A group of friends that could understand, with kids in a similar age group. Wish I had friends with kids in a similar age that we could hang out with. (157)

For another father, his wife was instrumental in establishing friendships. “My wife has lots of friends and I feed off those” (158).

Spiritual beliefs. Religion or spiritual beliefs was also identified as a support for some of the fathers interviewed. Six fathers commented on the importance of God or finding support in religion. One stated, “God brought us (child’s mother and I) together for a reason, and that’s to have these children and take care of them” (154). Another father stated, “I believe in God and go to church. I pray and keep faith. It’s a support, keeps me going every day” (165). Another father noted that he and his wife were raised in different religions and have not yet resolved the issue of a suitable church. “We are trying to get back to church but we have two different religions and neither of us wants to go to the other’s church” (164).

Support helped some of these fathers manage responsibilities for their children. It seemed to help them feel socially and spiritually buoyed in their role. For some this provided advice as well as material goods to assist him in raising his children. Some participants also noted how they manage the challenges in their lives. The fathers in this study were faced with a variety of challenges that seemed to change over time. It appears that flexibility and responsiveness to challenges impact the fathering they are able to provide.

Managing challenges. The fathers in this study face multiple challenges. The ability and willingness to manage these challenges impacts the fathering they provide to their children. The

challenges are described in descending order of frequency and include DSS involvement, stress, anger, neighborhood/community violence, time for self, and transportation.

Involvement with DSS. Fourteen fathers discussed their involvement with DSS. The majority of the fathers interviewed have found challenges in their involvement with DSS. These included fathers feeling they received differential treatment than mothers; finding the process stressful; and noting a variety of consequences. While the vast majority found multiple challenges in the process, only one noted a positive aspect. “This situation with CPS and my kids in foster care, I think that’s the biggest blessing that could have happened to me because it put me in a different mindset. OK your kids are gone, what can you do now? It woke me up” (154).

Four of the fathers stated they do not think they are being given a fair chance. “I feel like I’m not getting a fair trial” (165). “I had told the judge that the kids complained about being hit with belts (by their mom) and it seemed like the judge swept it under the carpet, didn’t seem to care when I brought it up” (158). Another father stated that his children’s mother frequently missed court appearances. “For four years I tried to get custody, the court kept giving her chances even though she didn’t show up” (156).

Four fathers reported that they found involvement with DSS to be very stressful. “Having the kids removed and dealing with CPS is really stressing me out” (165). A father of four whose children are currently in foster care stated, “This situation has changed me. If this happens again, we won’t get our kids back and I can’t have that happen because that would be the death of me. I’d probably have a heart attack, a broken heart” (154).

Fathers reported various ramifications of their DSS involvement. Three fathers commented on the difficulty of having their children removed. Two noted that it was an expensive process to hire a lawyer to defend themselves. “I wanted to prove my innocence and spent \$5,000 on a lawyer” (164). Another stated, “I went through it all with her (child’s mother). We spent more than \$10,000 on court” (158). Another reported that due to his abuse of his son, “I lost my gun permit” (159). He further stated, “It was traumatizing for me.”

Feeling misunderstood by DSS. Ten fathers commented that they did not feel the DSS system got to know “the real me” and felt misunderstood.

CPS should get to know the person before acting on the rulings. They do a little bit.

They should take it case by case, every situation is different. Every child is not the same, every parent is not the same. (164)

One father stated that he wished CPS workers realized, “That my past in no way reflects who I am as a father. No shape, form or fashion” (162). Another father stated, “People think I’m a bad person, I’m not a bad person. I’m misjudged a lot” (151). One father commented that he wished CPS workers knew, “What type of person I am instead of judging me by my appearance. They see the tattoos and the gold (teeth), but that’s just decoration” (165). Another father stated he wished his workers knew, “I love my children. I’m a good father” (156).

Stress. Eleven fathers reported that stress was an issue for them. In response to being asked about stress, one father stated, “It has always been an issue for me” (159). While another noted that “stress affects me a lot” (154). The fathers interviewed reported a variety of contributing factors to their stress. These included relationships with family members, work, CPS.

Family related stress was the most commonly named (n=9). Some of the stress was related to caring for children and lack of time. One father stated, “I didn’t know babies cried so much and that was stressful” (164). “When we have free time, it’s with the kids ...they wear us down” (163). Other causes of family stress related to fulfilling the fathering role. “Now I stress about not being able to be the best dad I can be for my 2-year old” (162). Another father commented on the impact of stress, “Because I’m everything. I’m the protector, Dad. I don’t have the right to be stressed out” (162).

One father reported that at times he is called in to work without notice, which is a source of stress for himself and his family, “Sometimes I have to work at the last minute” (163). Another reported that finances are a stressor, “Money is the biggest stress now” (153). Involvement with CPS and its consequences was noted as another stressor. A father whose children are currently in foster care stated, “The current situation has been very stressful...” (154).

Fathers (n=8) also verbalized various consequences of their stress, including their attitude, health and relationships. One father stated, “Some stress makes me miserable where I don’t want to be around anybody” (153). “I get an attitude when I’m stressed, don’t want to be bothered, don’t want to talk” (154). Another reported that stress “impacts my sleep” (157). Another father reported due to stress, “I’ve lost a lot of weight” (154). Two fathers reported that stress impacted their blood pressure and another noted that he had ulcers. “My wife encouraged me to do something about it. I have ulcers. I’m doing a lot better now” (159).

Fathers (n=3) identified several coping strategies for managing stress. Primarily, fathers engaged in activities to decrease their level of stress. “I do things to take my mind off of it, I

play video games or drive around or go to the shooting range” (164). Another father reported, “I’ve got my artwork...I can listen to jazz and draw and calm myself down” (154). One participant who had experienced marital issues reported that “going to counseling and learning how to handle it and talk through my problems” (163) was helpful.

Two fathers noted that they try to hide their stress from their children. “I try not to put it (my stress) on my children” (155). Another stated, “I did a good job containing my pain from my children. To them everything was okay. They never knew the electricity was turned off. They didn’t know I didn’t have a job” (162).

Anger. Seven of the fathers reported that their anger is an area of concern. “I wish I would have learned to control my temper. In the past it cost me quite a few jobs” (162). Another stated, “I have an anger problem, because I speak my mind” (165). One father who conceded that he had not handled problems well in the past, disagreed with being labeled as a person with anger problems. “I have to go to anger management, but I don’t have anger problems. I could have handled the problem differently, but I’m not the person they make me out to be” (156).

One stated that he was angry at his own father, but had not addressed it. “A lot of my anger was unresolved issues with my Dad. A lot of it was directed at the wrong people” (164). In this case, others were the recipients of this unresolved anger. For another father, repeatedly going to court for custody issues was a trigger for his anger. “Got to the point I would lash out at people because I was so mad. As of late, it’s better, since I gave up custody of the older boys” (158).

Neighborhood/Community Violence. Four fathers reported that their current neighborhood has been a challenge. One father stated, “I want to move out of Richmond” (156).

“I don’t want my sons to run with hardheads in the city. I’d love to move to the country” (154). Another father who was very dissatisfied with his current neighborhood stated, “We needed to find housing quickly. I want to find a better place soon” (157).

Time for self. Three of the fathers noted that finding time for themselves has been a challenge. “If I want to do something by myself, it can be hard because the boys always want to be with me” (164). Another stated, “I don’t really do anything for myself” (154). Another father reported on a way he manages the situation, “Now I stay up until they go to sleep and then it’s my time to watch my movie and be off the clock” (153).

Transportation. Lack of transportation was an issue for three of the fathers in this study. Fathers reported that it limits their ability to see the children, what they can do when together, and impacts their ability to find work. “If I had a car I’d go over there (to his mother’s house where child currently lives) every day, but no buses run where they live” (156). Another father stated, “I wish I could take my kids out to do things, but I don’t have transportation” (153). “We don’t have a car right now, so I leave the house at 6am every morning to catch a bus so I can look for a job” (162).

Managing the previous challenges presents various levels of difficulty for these fathers, depending on their unique situation and circumstance. In order to provide acceptable fathering, they each were required to deal with those that were applicable. Additionally, these fathers were required to manage the resources available to them.

Managing resources. It was clear that these fathers have a certain amount of resources to work with. Some have more than others, although all had to make decisions regarding how to best use the resources available to them. For most of the fathers in this study, limited resources

in one or more areas was a challenge. The resources noted by the fathers who participated included time with children, finances, transportation, and energy.

Time with children. Fourteen fathers discussed time with their children. Eight of the fathers described missing time with their children for various reasons including being in prison, work or school obligations, the child living far away or in foster care. A father of five stated, “Everyone wants time. Even as they get older, they still want to be babied up” (153).

One father reported, “I got locked up while she was pregnant with my son and did two years. I missed when he was a baby” (161). Another father stated, “I missed a lot of years from working, where I couldn’t be there for all the games” (163). Foster care has limited the amount of time another father spends with his children. When asked about the quantity of time he spends with his kids, he responded, “When they lived with me it was good. Now it’s less than an hour a week” (165).

Four fathers noted differential amounts of time with their children. “With the last three, I had more time to spend with them because I had a spinal injury and had time off from work” (152). Another father noted the differing amount of time he was able to spend with his children due to attending college out of state. “I spent more time with my daughters, not as much with my son. I went off to college and went to Maryland...I had too little (time) with my oldest three kids, way too little” (159). This father now has a new daughter and stated, “With my baby, I want to be involved 100%. I always want her with me.”

Three fathers noted that the amount of time they were able to spend with their children was not enough. When asked about the quantity of time he spends with his children, one father stated, “It could be more. If my girlfriend could work, it would be more because I wouldn’t have

to work as much, but she can't...When I'm awake, it's their time" (156). Another father expressed that the quantity of time with his kids is, "Not enough. I would spend all my time with them if someone would take care of my bills. I would stay with them all day, but it's impossible, you have to provide for them" (160).

Quality and quantity. Fathers were asked about both quantity and quality of their time with their children. Some fathers (n=8) stated their belief in the importance of quality of the time together. "Having that quality time means a lot. The smaller things have big impact. When you get older you always remember one small detail that you and your Dad did or you and your mother did and it will stick with you until the day you leave this earth" (154). Another stated, "It (quality) is important. They look for you to spend time with them and play with them. I play with them" (161). While other fathers placed less emphasis on quality. One stated, "I don't think it's about quality, it's about consistency" (158).

On occasion, there were significant barriers to spending time with their children, such as living in different states. Most of the fathers who lived in the same city, prioritized spending time with their kids. One father who does not live with his children stated, "When we (their mom and I) split up, I never really left. I was still a big part of their life, I still am" (160). Another father who lives with his two youngest children stated, "I feel like I learned from my oldest daughter and son what I missed out on so I try to make sure I don't do that with my youngest two" (151).

Finances. Ten of the fathers interviewed had some financial concerns. These included feeling that finances impacted their parenting; worrying about money; and paying lawyer bills. One father noted that when he isn't working and bringing in money, "It kind of makes me feel

like less of a father” (151). Another father reported that the financial concerns take a toll on family relationships. “When you’re arguing about money, it makes the marriage and relationship difficult. You need money to survive. I was working two part-time jobs and going to school, it’s difficult” (159).

Eight of the fathers reported that finances have influenced their parenting and what they are able to provide for their children.

It’s hard providing for them when everything isn’t going right. When both me and my wife are working, it’s a lot easier...When finances are good, I can concentrate more on doing things for them, being there for them, being able to provide things for them. (162)

A father of four stated, “When you don’t have money, you don’t have a way to buy diapers, that makes it difficult” (159). Another stated, “Sometimes it’s hard, I can’t get what the kids want right away. My kids know I do as much as I can for them” (156).

When asked what they needed to be the father they want to be, several fathers stated they needed money. Seven fathers reported that they have financial worries. One said, “I need a real job, money” (153). Another father noted that when his first child was born, “The child’s mother wasn’t working, so I worried about making ends meet. Money is a stressor, being the head of the household, I feel like I let them down sometimes because we can’t afford something” (164).

Three fathers noted that they were unprepared for how expensive it is to raise children. “I wish I knew how expensive kids are; diapers and formulas cost a lot. If I knew, I think I would have been better prepared financially” (164). Another stated that before having kids he wished he knew, “The money you need for everything, the spending” (161). A father who had

several children before marrying his wife noted that his wife was surprised at all of the expenses. “She sees how much money it takes with child support and daycare” (158).

Three fathers noted that lawyer fees stemming from their involvement with the DSS have been a financial stressor. One stated he had “lawyer fees, thousands of dollars” (159). Another reported, “I had a lawyer charge me \$10,000 (for representation in custody case) and I fired them. I won’t be used or abused” (152). Another father whose baby experienced Shaken Baby Syndrome was concerned about both medical and legal bills. “I’m \$133,000 in debt to the hospital and more debt to a lawyer to prove my innocence” (164).

Energy. Energy was discussed by two fathers. One stated that he thought being a young father was helpful. “It worked in my favor. I could work longer hours and have more energy” (152). Another father who was in his forties when his youngest child was born stated, “(It’s) hard now at my age with a 2-year old. She has so much energy. When my other kids were little, I could meet their energy. But she wears me out. I wouldn’t have it any other way” (162).

Theory

Through consideration of the various elements of acceptable fathering, one better understands what may lead to and constitute acceptable fathering. Prior discussion of the four categories that are proposed to lead to acceptable fathering helps us better understand the challenges and complexity involved in fathering for the fathers who participated in this study.

The first category of this theory is Father’s Family of Origin. This category examines the strengths and challenges of family members that impact the father as he is growing up. This involves three subcategories: father involvement in family of origin; learning from family of origin; and parenting practices in family of origin. These experiences seem to have both positive

and negative effects. Family of origin impacts the father's individual profile, father's relationships with his children's mothers, fathers' relationships with his children, as well as acceptable fathering.

The second category is Father's Individual Profile. This category examines the various challenges and strengths of fathers and their impact on the father and his relationships with others. The major subcategories include: willingness to learn; willingness to change; work and school; incarceration; having children at a young age; social fathering; mental health issues; substance abuse; persistence; and preparation. A father's individual profile appears to impact his relationships with his children's mother(s), his relationships with his children, and acceptable fathering.

The third category is Father's Relationships with Children's Mother(s). Both father's family of origin and individual profile seem to impact his relationship with children's mother(s). This category examines both positive and negative aspects of fathers' relationships with the mothers of their children. Subcategories include: family structure and multi-partner fertility; family size; dynamics; challenges experienced by children's mother(s); communication; and regrets. These elements shed light on the relationship between the father and the mother(s) of his children, but also may impact the father's relationship with his children.

Father's Relationship with Children is the fourth category. This category seems influenced by the three preceding categories and influences father's relationships with children's mother(s) and acceptable fathering. This category considers issues related to the father, the child, as well as relational issues which impact the father's relationships with his children. The subcategories include: living arrangements; involvement with children including roles and

discipline; risk-taking behaviors; child specific factors; abuse/neglect; understanding children's relationships with others; father's fit with child; expectations; and putting kids first. This category, along with the previous categories each appears to influence acceptable fathering.

The final and core category of this theory is Acceptable Fathering. The four previous categories seem to impact a father's ability to achieve acceptable fathering. Within acceptable fathering are the dimensions of acceptable fathering and elements that facilitate this fathering. These include support; managing challenges; and managing resources. Figure 4.1 displays a model of the theory which is entitled Fathering in a Context of Challenge and Complexity.

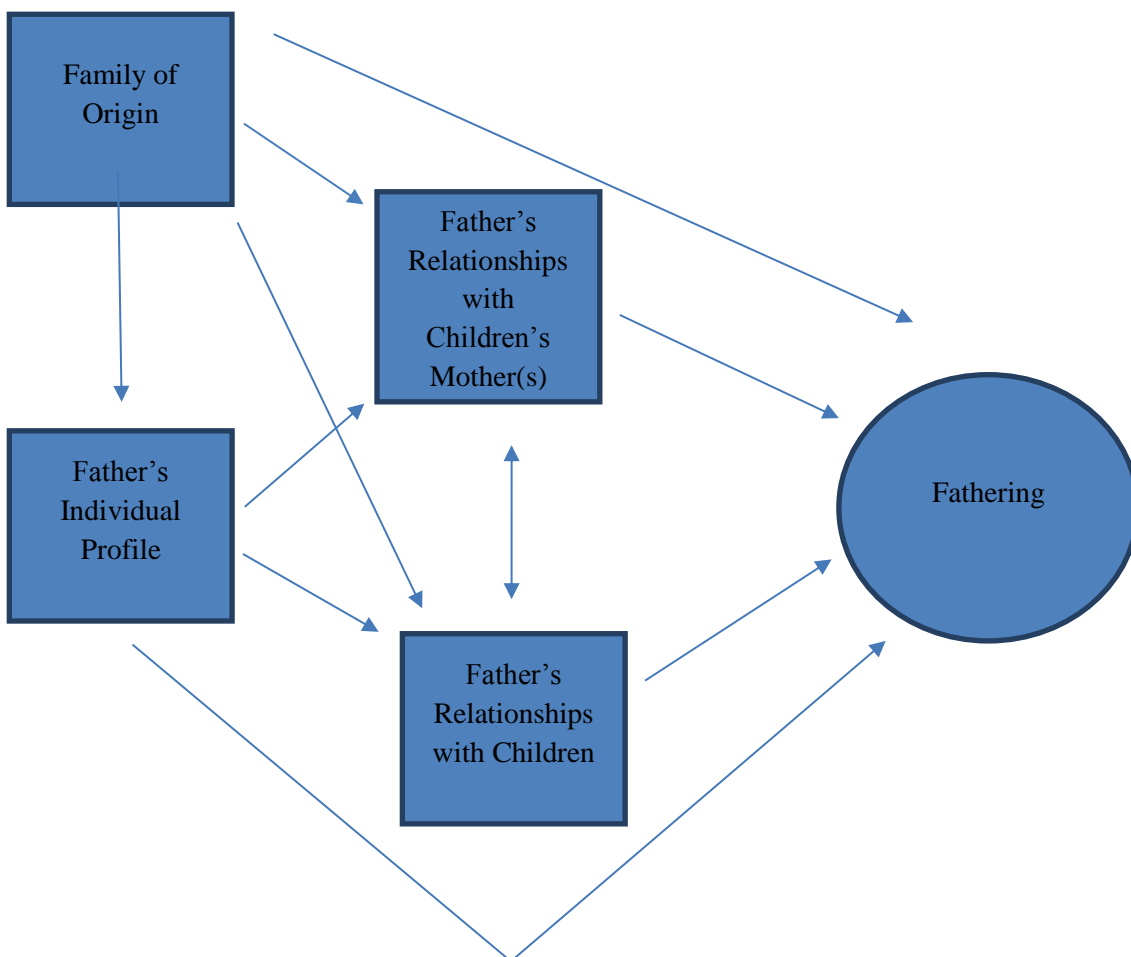


Figure 4.1: Fathering in a Context of Challenge and Complexity

Conclusion

This study used a traditional grounded theory approach to answer three primary questions. The following provides a brief response to the research questions driving this study.

1. What are the attitudes, behaviors and contexts of fathers who have abused or neglected a child that relate to maltreatment? Attitudes that condone corporal punishment and the belief that corporal punishment is not only acceptable but necessary to impact a child's behavior appear to be related to maltreatment for the fathers in this study. Father's behaviors of utilizing a belt to spank their child appear related to maltreatment. Inappropriate expectations of children was another important factor seemingly related to maltreatment. Contexts created by drug use, incarceration, and low income also seemed to play a part in maltreatment.

2. What are the resources and capacities of these fathers which could be capitalized on? The fathers in this study were involved and invested in their children's lives. They described being willing to change and willing to learn new behaviors. Several of the fathers expressed the desire to parent their children well, but acknowledged lacking skills and resources to do so. The fathers in this study hoped to positively impact their biological children as well as those with whom they had a social fathering relationship. Even with multiple challenges of various types they appeared to be committed to being responsible for all the children for whom they played a fathering role.

3. How does goodness-of-fit or a poor fit between the father and child impact the parenting relationships of these fathers? The fathers who recognized their children's unique temperament appeared more able to appropriately respond to their child's needs and individualized style of learning. Those fathers who struggled with understanding and respecting their child's

temperament seemed more frustrated with more inappropriate expectations and appeared to have a more difficult relationship with their child.

The theory described in this chapter proposes a model to explain relevant factors that contribute to acceptable fathering. It is through examining each of the categories individually, then as a whole that a fuller picture emerges of the challenges and strengths faced by the fathers in this study. By understanding the parts and the whole, several areas for intervention are apparent. The following chapter will discuss the implications of this study for policy, education, and practice in social work.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The results of this grounded theory study indicate the extent of the challenges and complexity for the fathers involved in this research. While fathers are often viewed as uninvolved or unimportant, the fathers in this study desired interaction and involvement with their children and believed in the importance of their role in the lives of their children.

The following sections will discuss the findings from the data provided by a majority of fathers for each of the five categories, general findings of importance, along with the limitations and strengths of this grounded theory study, this theory's connection to social work and social justice, and directions for future research.

Father's Family of Origin

The fathers in this study reported learning from their fathers, both positive and negative lessons. Lack of father involvement was a powerful motivator for the fathers whose own father was uninvolved. Other family members were important figures in the lives of these fathers, including mothers, grandmothers and other family members. For some of the fathers, their grandmother played an essential role in their life.

More than half of the fathers in the study noted areas of significant concern in their family of origin. These included substance abuse issues, mental health issues, IPV, and lack of supervision. In general, the fathers in this study received nurturing and affection from their mothers; mothers tended to provide the emotional support.

Forty percent of the fathers in the study were maltreated as a child. Others reported that there were no consequences or discipline in their home. Thirty-three percent had fathers who were minimally involved or uninvolved. Previous literature has suggested that becoming a father at a young age was more likely when a young man did not grow up with a stable biological or step- father in his life (Furstenberg and Weiss, 2000). In the current study, eighty percent of the fathers whose own father was minimally involved had children at a young age. Positive involvement of a man's biological father during his childhood may be a source of resilience and increase the likelihood that he remains involved with his own child (Fagan & Palkovitz, 2007). The fathers in this study received little appropriate and healthy modeling of what positive discipline and healthy fathering looks like. Many were figuring it out as they went or repeating inappropriate patterns.

Previous studies have suggested some level of impact between the parenting one experienced in their family of origin and their later parenting practices (Belsky, Jaffee, Sligo, Woodward, & Silva, (2005). More recently, studies have been examining the interaction of multiple factors on fathers' attitudes and behaviors. A recent study found that negative discipline practices of fathers were predicted by an interaction of the behaviors and experiences of the child's mother and father's family of origin (Capaldi, Pears, Kerr, & Owen, 2008). The current study supports the idea of the interaction of multiple influences on father's behaviors.

Father's Individual Profile

The fathers in this study overwhelmingly described being willing to learn. For many, the act of fathering taught many lessons. They learned through trial and error. They increased their confidence through doing what was needed. Other fathers noted that their own experiences with

their parents and relatives taught them about fathering. Life experiences were another important form of learning; some noted generalizing knowledge learned in one's job to parenting.

Learning from mistakes was another way fathers learned. Often these related to mistakes in youth and growing from them. Four of the fathers in this study played an important role in caring for their siblings as they were growing up; these experiences helped them learn how to change diapers and make bottles. Fathers also helped care for girlfriends' children, which helped them learn how to care for their own children. In some cases, they were teenagers or very young adults, and noted it helped them learn about responsibility and helped prepare them for their own children.

Fathers also learned through observation. Two-thirds of the fathers in the study reported that watching others parent impacted how they act and react with their own children. This observation included family members, friends, and strangers. Parenting classes were identified as an important form of learning. Fathers also reported that they were willing and able to learn from their significant other. They picked up on specific skills such as changing diapers and differentiating cries as well as learning more about nurturing.

The fathers in this study described a multitude of ways they had changed since becoming a father. All but one participant reported changing. This willingness to change resulted in major modifications in the lives of these fathers, often resulting in positive change for themselves and their children. Fathers reported that becoming a father helped them become more responsible and mature. Several changed their life course and stopped illegal or dangerous activity and spent more time at home. Fathers were also able to identify that there is still change needed in their lives. Twelve fathers were self-aware enough to identify current issues they would like to

change and improve. A strengths based perspective on troubled fathers seems lacking in the literature.

Father's Relationship with children's mother(s)

Family structure was an issue discussed by all 15 fathers. This subcategory was notable for the degree of change in family structure experienced by most of the fathers. By examining only current family structure, much of the detail would have been lost. Cavanagh (2008) states that research concerning family structure has generally viewed it as static, rather than capturing the full extent of complexity experienced by some families. Some of the fathers in this study have been married multiple times. Others have never married, but have been in long term relationships. Multi-partnered fertility is an essential component of this issue. Seventy-one point four percent of the fathers in this study with more than one child, fathered children with more than one partner. Recent research by Guzzo (2014) estimates that approximately 13 percent of men between the ages of 40 and 44 have experienced MPF. Another study that included rates of MPF for fathers who were unmarried and nonresident at the time of their first child's birth were 48 percent (Scott, Peterson, Ikramullah, & Manlove, 2013). The rates for men in this study were significantly higher. For the fathers in this study, one father partnered with up to five women. This can add a significant element of complexity and can impact multiple areas including father's relationships with children's mother(s), father's relationships with his children and relationships between siblings.

Family size was discussed by 13 of the fathers. The father's perceptions of the appropriate size varied. Interestingly, the two fathers with the largest number of children did not report being overwhelmed. Although neither of these fathers lives with all of their children, they

both had regular visitation and/or custody of some kids...until an incident where some of their children were moved into foster care. It is likely that different fathers are able to manage different numbers of children depending on a variety of factors such as: father's temperament, children's living arrangements, father's involvement, fathers' relationships with children's mothers, support, and financial resources. Clearly, this is a more complicated issue than simply numbers of children. Existing literature has shown mixed results concerning whether a larger family size dilutes parenting resources. Some research has indicated that larger sibling groups negatively impact educational attainment (Jaeger, 2008). However, the Jaeger study only included intact Caucasian families with parents who had completed high school. Another study found decreases in positive interactions but no negative impact on consistent parenting when family sizes increase (Strohschein, Gauthier, Campbell, & Kleparchuk, 2008). The Strohschein et al. study only included the perspectives of mothers in intact families. The current research extends this work by including the perspectives of fathers from a variety of family structures on family size.

Dynamics in the relationship between fathers and the mothers of his children was discussed by 13 fathers. There were a variety of problematic aspects of these relationships including arguing and infidelity. The results of this study were consistent with previous research suggesting that the quality of the father's relationship with the child's mother has both direct and indirect effects on the child and mother (Downey & Coyne, 1990; Flouri, 2005).

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) was identified as a concern for ten of the fathers. The level of violence described was significant in many cases. Results of a previous study found 40.7% of parents who were accused of maltreating a child were also found to have perpetrated IPV (Dixon, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Browne, Ostapuik, 2007). In the current study, all three

fathers who reported they were in a parenting intervention due to custody issues had experienced IPV, along with seven fathers who reported they were in the intervention due to maltreatment. Father's described the mothers of their children as aggressors in many of the situations. The literature regarding female perpetrators of IPV is limited. A study by Cho and Wilke (2010) found that while women are victimized far more frequently, when they were the perpetrator they tended to use more severe forms of violence. The current research extends this finding as the majority of the fathers in this study were both victims and aggressors. In some instances fathers reported protecting themselves from aggression of their partner and in other instances admitted to being the aggressor. Fathers also noted positive aspects of these relationships. As fathers are parenting with up to five mothers, it is important to note that some of these relationships were reported to be healthier than others.

Father's Relationships with His Children

Living arrangements were discussed by all 15 fathers. There was a great deal of fluidity in living arrangements. In some cases father, mother and child all lived together for some period of time, followed by father moving out and the child spending some time with mother and some with father. Again, a snapshot in time does not provide a full picture of the complexity of living arrangements. Findings of this study were consistent with previous studies (Carlson, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008) that a substantial percentage of unmarried fathers are living apart from their children. However, this study found that while many of the fathers have children they do not live with, nine fathers also had children who did live with them. A father may have one or more children who live with him, while one or more live with mother, other relatives, or in foster care.

Father's involvement with his children is another important area and was discussed by all of the participants. Father's described a range of involvement, sometimes based on decisions on the part of the father and at other times, due to circumstances such as a mother moving out of state with the child. Each of the 15 fathers described active involvement with one or more of his children. These findings were consistent with the results of Dubowitz, Lane, Ross, and Vaughan (2004) who found that low income African American fathers showed a strong commitment to their children and to their role as fathers. Father's engaged in a variety of activities with their children. The most common activities were active and play related. Whether married or unmarried, the fathers in this study desired active involvement with their children. This is consistent with prior research suggesting that unmarried fathers were engaged and involved with their children (Edin, Tach, & Mincy, 2009). Regardless of whether they resided with the children, the fathers in this study said they were involved. This is consistent with more recent research suggesting nonresident fathers have more involvement with their children than previous research suggests (Cabrera et al., 2004). Fathers who could not see their children regularly due to distance often reported relying on phone calls and texting to maintain contact in between visits.

Fourteen fathers discussed risk-taking behaviors. The majority reported encouraging appropriate and healthy risk-taking. Many believed it helped the child's learning and development of motor skills. The results of this study extend the findings of Brussoni and Olsen (2011) that fathers believe there is value in risk-taking opportunities, even when possibility of minor injury exists. Many of the fathers in this study expressed similar sentiments. The findings of this study offer possible reasons that fathers discourage risk-taking. Four of the fathers were hesitant to let their children engage in these types of activities as they feared that the child

getting hurt would negatively impact him or that he would be blamed by Child Protective Services (CPS) for a child's injury.

Child specific factors that impacted the fathers' relationships with his children were discussed by fourteen of the fathers. The factors noted as relevant included illness/disability, gender of the child, behavioral issues, and age and personality. Some of the fathers found themselves in the position of needing to advocate for special care for their child. Others found that the child's illness drew them closer to the child and impacted the strength of their relationship. Similarly, prior research with fathers of children with complex healthcare needs found that there were rewarding aspects of caring for these children and some fathers described feeling more attached as a result of providing care (Hobson & Noyes, 2011).

Acceptable Fathering

Fathers in this study displayed a range of strengths in fathering. They identified the importance of being: loving, nurturing, protective, patient, a good provider, playing with the child, and emphasizing the importance of education. A majority of fathers described fathering as "fun" and "enjoyable." Little literature was found regarding father's enjoyment of the fathering role; however, results of a study in the United Kingdom discussed first time father's enjoyment of fathering (Henwood & Procter, 2003).

Support was an important subcategory for all of the fathers. A majority of the fathers identified one or more people, in addition to the child's biological mother, who assisted in caring for the children. A recent study of adults who were maltreated as children found that men who perceived higher levels of social support had lower levels of trauma symptoms (Evans, Steel, DiLillo, 2013). This finding emphasizes the importance of support both before and while

fathering. The parenting partners of those in the current study assisted in both concrete and emotionally supportive ways. Most frequently, it was the father's mother who assisted in these ways, but could include father's mother-in-law, or his aunts and uncles. In some cases, parenting partners were instrumental in helping the children avoid foster care. Social supports and spirituality were also noted as important elements of feeling supported.

All of the fathers discussed managing challenges in their lives. Some of these challenges included Department of Social Services (DSS) involvement, problem behaviors, and stress. Fourteen fathers commented on challenges in their involvement with DSS. Many felt they received differential treatment than mothers. Fathers also reported feeling misunderstood by DSS. They overwhelmingly felt that DSS did not understand their strengths or the love they have for their children. These findings reinforce previous research by Bellamy (2009) stressing the necessity of learning more effective ways to engage fathers in services and finding effective ways to include them in services. Stress was a significant challenge for 11 of the fathers. Some have always struggled with managing stress, whereas for others, stress was related to children and families. Some of the fathers identified coping strategies which often involved distraction or avoidance.

The ability to manage resources was discussed by all fifteen fathers. Many of the fathers had limited resources in one or more areas. Some of the resources noted by the fathers included time with children and finances. Over half of the fathers who participated missed time with their children for reasons including incarceration, work or school obligations, or the child living out of state or in foster care. The fathers who were more financially stable reported that it made parenting easier as there was less worry about paying bills and providing what the children needed. Finances were an area of concern for ten of the fathers. Some believed that their

finances impacted their parenting; some had difficulty paying bills, or noted worrying about money. These results had similarities to a study by Dubowitz, Lane, Ross, and Vaughan (2004) concerning low income African American fathers. In the Dubowitz et al. study, some fathers described financial limitations as a barrier to their parenting, while others emphasized the importance of time with children.

General Findings related to Fathering in a Context of Challenge and Complexity Theory

The grounded theory developed from this study provides rich information regarding the lives and involvement of the fifteen fathers interviewed. Several important areas were discovered through the in-depth interviews with fathers. These include the importance of change, father involvement, social fathering, marriage, age, and becoming a father as a turning point.

Change. The concept of change was salient for the fathers in this study. There was frequent movement in multiple areas. Change was the constant. It is important to consider various elements of change for fathers, including marital status and incarceration.

There was change in their marital status. Currently, there is greater fluidity in marital status (Simon, 2002), which may not be captured in studies using cross-sectional data. The fathers in this study, for the most part, were in several different relationships. And this is only counting the women they had children with, not those they were romantically involved in, but did not have a child with. Much of this seemed to impact change in their involvement with their children. These relationships may also have impacted the children as they had to adjust to a new girlfriend or step-mother, new expectations, rules, and sometimes additional children if she has her own (Fomby & Osborne, 2010).

These fathers experienced change in incarceration status. What was true with their first child may no longer be true with subsequent children. In many cases, fathers were incarcerated for a portion of one child's life, but no longer incarcerated when younger children were born. Therefore, they were more involved and able to be present for events in these children's lives that they missed with older children. Many fathers discussed the impact of incarceration. It changed their relationships with their children and changed them as a person. It impacted their priorities, perceptions, and thinking.

Incarceration impacted their time and involvement with children. It impacted their ability to find work and the type of work, both of which impact their ability to financially provide for their children. Formerly incarcerated fathers frequently struggle with stable employment and adequate wages (Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001).

Involvement. The fathers in this study are involved, regardless of whether they are married or living with children. They are participating in their children's lives and value involvement. Some wanted more involvement, such as helping with homework and school involvement. Recent research suggests that the type of involvement matters, with high quality interaction between father and child being more important than quantity of time spent together (Carlson & Magnuson, 2011). Adamsons and Johnson (2013) found that nonresident father involvement in child-related activities, participation in various types of involvement, and having a positive relationship between the child and father were correlated with child well-being. The current study provides insight into the various types of activities engaged in by both residential and nonresidential fathers. Some of the participants wanted to see their children who lived in another state or were in foster care more frequently. While previous research has indicated that residential fathers are more involved than those who live apart from their children (Gorvine,

2010), it is important to remember that living with a child does not in itself guarantee involvement nor does living apart from a child necessarily indicate lack of involvement (Hetherington and Hagan, 1986). Differences in involvement have been found based on age of father (Castillo, Welch, Sarver, 2011), father's race and ethnicity (Cabrera, Ryan, Mitchell, Shannon, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2008), and the quality of the relationship between the mother and father (Fagan, Palkovitz, Roy, & Farrie, 2009).

A previous study by Coley and Chase-Lansdale (1999) found that fathers who were employed tended to be more involved with their children. Results of this study did not support this finding. Those who were unemployed suggested that they were at least as involved as those who were employed. As they had more time available, some of this time was spent with their children. Two fathers who were employed full time expressed the desire to work less so they could spend more time with their children.

A significantly understudied area of fathering is better understanding how children impact father-child interaction. Holmes and Huston (2010) found that children contribute to and influence father involvement in a subsample of stably married families. The results of the current study suggest that child factors impact father interaction and involvement in a wider range of family structures.

Social fathering. Social fathering (though not named as such by participants) was a frequent occurrence for the fathers in this study. Dubowitz (2009) has stated the importance of including social fathers in research. Some of the fathers in this study had a social fathering relationship with multiple children; this varied given the parenting status of the women with whom they were romantically involved. Many of the fathers became a social father at a very

young age, sometimes while still a teenager. Bzostek (2008) found that involvement by resident social fathers benefitted children's health and was associated with fewer behavioral problems.

Marriage and family. One cannot assume that those who are married have a collaborative or stable marriage (Walker & McGraw, 2012); the findings of this study are in agreement. This research also suggests that marriage/step-parenting does not necessarily mean that an adult's relationship with child is strong or healthy. In this study, this may be related to characteristics of the child, the father, the mother, or a combination of these. These results extend our understanding that developmental outcomes are produced by blending of the individual and their experiences (Sameroff & Fiese, 2000). This study suggests that through recognizing bidirectional influence, we can begin to sort out why and how children influence parents and parents influence children (Pleck, 2007). Further, in this study it would seem that marriage in and of itself is unlikely to improve a troubled relationship between a child and step-parent. Similarly, a United Kingdom study examining children's adjustment in various family structures found that whether the mother and her partner were married was not a good predictor of child adjustment outcomes (Dunn, Deater-Deckard, Pickering, O'Connor, & Golding, 1998).

Age. Many of the fathers in this study recognized the difficulty of parenting at a younger age. They realized that they were emotionally and financially unprepared. Deslauriers, Devault, Groulx, and Sévigny (2012) noted that young fathers often believe in the importance of being a good provider yet feel unprepared to do so. Some fathers noted that they had more energy as younger fathers which they believed was beneficial. Some of the younger fathers were still in high school when their oldest child was born. In some cases, a father was working one or more part-time jobs, attending high school, and fathering.

Turning Point. Many of the fathers in this study identified becoming a father as an important turning point in their life, a time when they assumed more responsibility and a time when they made significant change. Some of the fathers believed that this life change (fatherhood) was the impetus to get them off the street, no longer selling drugs or hanging out all night. A Canadian study found that becoming a father was viewed as a time for some young fathers to make important changes (Deslauriers et al., 2012). The current study extends these results by examining both younger fathers and those who became a father at a later age and found that the majority viewed the birth of their child as a time they made significant changes.

Like the fathers in Dubowitz, Lane, Greif, Jensen, and Lamb's (2006) study of low-income African American father's involvement, the fathers in the current study are trying. They often lack the necessary skills and education. In many cases they are doing more than was done for them, so from their perspective it might seem adequate or more than adequate. When one's own father was uninvolved or minimally involved, being regularly involved in your child's life may seem like a huge stride forward. Moving from zero involvement to any level of involvement seems significant. Additionally, for fathers whose model was unhealthy and negative parenting practices, it was clear from this study that the need exists for specific suggestions on fathering (Grief, Jones, Worthy, White, Davis, & Pitchford, 2011).

Limitations and Strengths of This Grounded Theory Research

Limitations. A limitation of this study is that only 15 fathers were interviewed. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized to larger populations. In chapter two the dearth of evidence based information about this population was made clear, so that in this

case some information is better than no information. This study provides important information to move in the direction of better understanding this population.

Another limitation is that all of the information was self-reported by the fathers and they were all recruited from a service program designed to educate parents alleged to have trouble in their parenting roles. There is the possibility that these fathers were “faking good” and reporting more desirable behaviors than was true or failing to report less socially desirable behaviors or attitudes. While this possibility exists, fathers did report a great deal of behavior that was less than socially desirable. They described gang involvement, drug use and selling, physical punishment of children and IPV.

Since no information was gathered by children, mothers, or DSS workers, it is not possible to corroborate the information provided by fathers. Also, as no valid and reliable instruments were used, it is not possible to assert valid findings or to compare the results of the qualitative interviews with quantitative results. Thus, some of the father’s views may be inaccurate as they are a father’s perceptions regarding what he was willing to share with the interviewer, but may not provide the full picture of all the stakeholders to his fathering.

This study only included heterosexual fathers. While this exclusion was not purposeful, it is another dimension that may lessen applicability of the findings.

Another limitation is that each of the fathers self-selected into the study, possibly providing some type of bias. It is possible that those who chose to participate are different from other fathers involved in the same parenting program. They may have been more comfortable with their behaviors or less embarrassed to discuss the reasons they are involved in parenting group. Maximum variation in the sample may have overcome this challenge.

Strengths. A significant strength of this study is that fathers, an understudied population, were able to share their experiences in their own words. This allowed for father's attitudes and perceptions to be heard without filter or framing by the researcher. Fathers were able to share their views on fathering in an open-ended interview format which provided time and space for them to share their views on a variety of aspects of fathering. Many studies which examine fathers and father involvement rely on mother report (Goeke-Morey, & Cummings, 2007; Gorvine, 2010; Wical & Doherty, 2005); father report of his involvement showed a more consistent predictive relation to child outcomes than did mother report (Hernandez & Coley, 2007). Having father perspectives and their reporting of these is particularly important when understanding type of involvement and activities fathers engage in with their children. Fathers in this study were able to provide more detailed information about their direct involvement with their children. This is particularly important, as it appears from this study that mothers were not present for some or all of these activities, thus making it possible to extend the ideas of the dimensions of father involvement.

Another important strength is that some important and understudied subgroups of fathers were included due to the maximum variation strategy used in sampling. Most notably, these include fathers who have maltreated a child (Guterman & Lee, 2005; Lee, Bellamy, & Guterman, 2009; Risley-Curtiss & Heffernan, 2003; Strega, Brown, Callahan, Dominelli, & Walmsley, 2009), unmarried fathers (Edin, Tach, & Mincy, 2009; Magnuson & Duncan, 2002), social fathers (Berger & Langton, 2011; Gorvine, 2010), and young fathers (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Fagan & Lee, 2011; Paschal, Lewis-Moss, & Hsiao, 2011). As limited research includes these subgroups, this study provides more information and extends our knowledge of these subgroups.

Additionally, this study included information about father's family of origin. It also asked about all of his children from all of their mothers, including non-biological children. "To understand fathers, the complimentary family subsystems of the mother-child relationship, the sib-sib relationship, and the marital relationship need to be considered" (Parke, Dennis, Flyr, Morris, Leidy, & Schofield, 2005, p. 104). This study examined each of these areas, in addition to family of origin to gain a thorough picture of these fathers and their fathering relationships. Gaining a better understanding of father's significant relationships, past and present, should help us understand which relationships and factors may influence his fathering.

Connection to Social Work and Social Justice

Fathering and child maltreatment is an area where interventions are grossly understudied. We need much more information to design and implement effective treatment options. This study begins to address this concern by providing information about the attitudes, behaviors, and contexts of these fathers. The fathers in this study provided information and clues to help researchers and practitioners design interventions that meet their needs while acknowledging pre-existing strengths and resources.

Thus far, fathers have not received the attention or resources given to mothers. The majority of studies of parenting only include mothers. To increase social justice for fathers, we must first understand them, and then develop appropriate interventions which target their needs. By decreasing the knowledge gap on fathers and maltreatment, we are also increasing our ability to keep children safe. The more we know about fathers and their needs, the more likely we are to build effective interventions. The more effective the parenting interventions, the more likely they are to provide needed skills, education, and resources to fathers. All of this helps make children safer. If we want to protect a vulnerable population, we must ensure that their

caretakers have adequate, culturally sensitive and effective treatment interventions. This area of social injustice can be addressed through education of social work students, adapting practice, and through future research.

Social work education

It is important to keep student's attention on child welfare. While there are new areas that must be attended to such as gerontological social work, we must not forget the importance of children and families. Social work educators need to help students understand the breadth and depth of the issues facing families and their children and help students understand how these are related to the many different aspects of direct and large systems practice.

As social work texts and theories generally do not include fathers (Brown et al., 2009; Clapton, 2009), it is important to provide additional information to students. Educators can provide examples and supplemental materials to provide more coverage on fathers. Both men and women have the potential to be involved, nurturing parents. Students need to realize this is not automatic for parents of either gender. Students can be educated on the importance and challenges of fathers (and mothers) in today's society and through that become attentive to the special needs and resources that differ between mothers and fathers and, therefore, the children they rear.

Social work students need knowledge of the ways substance abuse, mental health challenges, and trauma histories (including family and community violence) impact parents and parenting. They need to understand that many men are in a fathering role before they have biological children of their own. Understanding the import of these areas can influence the assessment and interventions utilized. Students need to understand the relevant issues so that they understand which questions need to be asked in assessing and determining an appropriate

course of action. Helping future social workers understand the importance of the relationship between fathers and mothers, regardless of whether they are still romantically involved, is essential for increasing the likelihood that children will be raised with high quality parenting relationships, thus hopefully leading to greater child wellbeing.

Social work direct practice

The theory developed from this study provides several places where intervention could take place. By looking at specific areas of the theory, we can identify places for targeted interventions. These include addressing mental health and substance abuse issues, providing universal parent education, addressing relationship skills between parents, increasing attention to research and curricula on father's in child welfare, consideration for father's activities and preferences that can be incorporated into interventions, and increased attention to sibling challenges and ways parents can address them.

Addressing mental health and substance abuse challenges should ideally take place early. Many of the fathers have traumatic histories such as having parents with substance abuse issues, mental health challenges, incarceration, who were abused and neglected, or did not have an involved father. Of the seven fathers with substance abuse issues, all of them had experienced other challenges as well. Six of the seven had an incarceration history. Four of the seven had experienced mental health issues. Four of the fathers experienced problems in their family of origin, such as an uninvolved father or a parent with substance abuse issues. Five of the seven with substance abuse challenges experienced two or more of these problems. Three fathers experienced three or more of these problems. Very few have received any kind of counseling, treatment or education. They are entering fathering with a trauma history that is largely unacknowledged. Many of the fathers do not seem to understand the full extent of the

repercussions. It is important to get these men the treatment they need to manage the trauma and begin healing. Until this happens, it is very difficult to provide high quality fathering no matter how much they want that. Providing services to men before they become a father is likely to be helpful to the man himself as well as the partners he has and the children he will someday father.

More than half of the fathers in this study became a father at or before the age of 21. Several of them became a father in their teens. This highlights the need to provide parenting education at an early age. We need to reach men and women before they become parents to provide needed education and skills.

As many of the men in this study became social fathers at a young age, this provides an additional reason why universal parent education is needed. Furthermore, the men who were social fathers experienced a range of other issues. Of the nine participants who were social fathers, two-thirds experienced mental health issues; nearly half had been incarcerated; and one-third had substance abuse challenges. Seven of the nine social fathers became biological fathers at or before the age of 21. These men are parenting or in a parent role early and/or often, yet lacking the needed tools. These fathers, both biological and social, are impacting young children. In order to make these interactions as healthy and positive as possible, it is important to provide parenting education and treatment services to these men before there are problems such as child maltreatment. It is in the best interest of these fathers and the children they parent to provide high quality education.

Fathers in this study were actively involved with their children. The fact that these fathers are involved, but have multiple stressors and limited knowledge of child development and positive discipline skills may place them at higher risk of perpetrating maltreatment than those

fathers who are uninvolved. This group of fathers, who are involved and have maltreated a child or are considered high risk has been understudied and is perhaps the group most in need of research and intervention given their good intentions, proximity and interactions with their children.

Father's relationships with partners are very important. For the fathers in this study, these relationships with child's mother were often conflictual, often violent. Two-thirds of the fathers who participated had experienced IPV as perpetrator, victim, or both. The situations the father's described were extremely violent and dangerous for both partners. Certainly exposing children to this level of violence is unhealthy. It is important to help partners develop strong communication skills and to resolve disagreements peacefully. There is a need to help parents develop healthy and constructive communication, whether or not they are romantically involved. While there has been a push for marriage, it may be more important to work towards healthy relationships, regardless of marital status. Communications skills and family life education at the high school level would be a good beginning, but family service agencies also need to extend their services in these areas, perhaps as part of their movement towards trauma-informed practice. Elliott, Bjelajac, Fallot, Markoff, and Reed's (2005) work is focused on trauma and women, but applies to fathers as well; they emphasize including a trauma-informed perspective from the time of engagement with clients through service provision as this is less likely to retraumatize clients and allows them to optimally benefit from services.

The majority of the fathers found parenting classes to be helpful. For some fathers, they did not realize how much they did not know until they were attending classes. Fathers noted that it was important to learn useful and relevant knowledge and skills. Some also noted that they liked feeling that they were helping other group members. They also noted that important

learning occurred through hearing other parents discuss their struggles. Unfortunately, this help came to project participants after troubles serious enough to create a court mandate for their participation in classes.

However they came to them, parenting classes were a powerful form of learning for these fathers. While some were initially reluctant or angry about attending, the majority found it very helpful. For some, this was the first time they admitted that their parenting needed improvement. The content was reported as helpful as they learned about trauma, positive discipline, and managing children's anger and frustration. Currently, there is a lack of research and curricula on fathers involved in child welfare (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erikson, 1998) and, unfortunately, the majority of intervention research on maltreating parents only involves mothers (Crooks, Scott, Francis, Kelly, & Reid, 2006).

Fathers also reported that the group process of parenting intervention was helpful. Fathers noted that they learned that they were not alone in their struggle; they were able to talk about their situation and learn from others. Additionally, for some of the fathers, the group experience allowed them to feel helpful to others.

Given the information fathers shared regarding television and videogame habits, it may be important to consider how this could be incorporated into interventions. Many of the fathers discussed watching television and playing videogames alone and with their children. In some cases the appropriateness of certain television shows and video games was questionable. However, it was a popular way to spend time. It is important to consider how this could inform intervention. Fathers may respond to action oriented videos where they could be involved in

critiquing the action of the actors. They may become more engaged in learning when technology is utilized as this is a medium with which they are already comfortable.

Fathers also discussed enjoying being active with their kids. Paquette (2004) discusses the preference many fathers exhibit for engaging with their children in exciting activities and the possibility that father-child attachment is built through play. It is important to take what is intrinsically a good fit for fathers and translate this into effective intervention. Many mothers also enjoy active engagement with their children. Perhaps interventions could include more activities that involve movement. Clinicians could include more suggestions for appropriate engagement that involve movement, rather than stillness. There will always be a need for both parents to hold their children and read to their children. There is room for active games that both do and do not involve formal learning. Sometimes having fun is just as important. Practitioners could include some parenting suggestions that are framed in language of activity. Whether this is related to comparing teaching children skills to riding a bike or in terminology similar to a baseball game, the likelihood is that by widening the frame of reference, more parents may be reached. For some parents this will make more sense and make the material more engaging and understandable.

Challenges exist for siblings when they live apart, either with different mothers or when one is in foster care and another is at home. One of the topics that is rarely discussed is the difficulty for a child in being separated from their sibling. It is important to help parents understand the challenges involved with these separations and give them the necessary education and skills to help children manage it.

Policy implications for social work

Family structure in the United States has changed significantly since the middle of the twentieth century (Cavanagh & Fomby, 2012). Given the high rates of divorce, unmarried couples with children, and MPF (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006; Carlson, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008; Guzzo, 2014), policies that unequivocally encourage marriage need to be reexamined. Programs and policies that focus on improving the communication and relationship skills of parents are important for the functioning of parents and the wellbeing of their children. “Regardless of whether parents are living together or apart, the quality of that relationship affects all members of the family” (Cowan, Cowan, & Knox, 2010, p. 225). Policies that encourage relational and parenting skills while acknowledging a range of family structures and living arrangements can meet parents where they are, rather than expect them to fit a preconceived mold. High quality parental relationships are important for children (Fomby & Osborne, 2010). One way to help provide this for children is to help their parents obtain and maintain a positive working relationship, regardless of marital status.

Current policies that tie father involvement to his ability to make child support payments must be reconsidered (National Child Welfare Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice, 2002). The Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) provided \$2.0 million for Responsible Fatherhood programs through Section 1115 grants or waivers. These programs took place between 1997 and 2002 in eight different states. Two notable findings reported about these programs were that orders for low-income parents who do not reside with their children are unrealistically high and that many of the participants had incarceration histories and substance abuse challenges (Pearson, Thoennes, Davis, Venohr, Price, & Griffith, 2003). Many of these fathers have experienced serious barriers to obtaining and maintaining higher wage jobs. Setting

unrealistic child support orders is unlikely to result in more payments being made if fathers cannot get and keep jobs that would allow them to make such payments and may further damage a tenuous father/child relations. These fathers need education and job skills, in addition to services to address mental health and substance abuse challenges, in order to be successful in the job market. While many of the Responsible Fatherhood programs attempt to address these challenges, the fact that they are funded and overseen by the Office of Child Support Enforcement, may be a deterrent to participation for some fathers. Furthermore, while child support payments are important, they are but one way that fathers contribute to their children's wellbeing (Glikman, 2004).

DSS policies should expect workers to engage with fathers and refer more fathers for services (Strega, Brown, Callahan, Dominelli, & Walmsley, 2009). Previous research indicates that practitioners and DSS workers need to do more to engage fathers in services. Assumptions that men are uninvolved, high risk, or irrelevant must be challenged (Walker, 2010). In order to do so, education and training must be in place for State and local staff in order to help them understand the direct and indirect impacts of father involvement on child's development and on children's mothers. Additionally, education on how to engage fathers in services is also important.

Directions for future research

Today and moving forward in research on families and their children, it is essential to consider differing configurations of families. There is an increased variability in types of family structure is changing. It is important to consider terminology and language that is inclusive. A social father may be more involved than a biological father and if he is involved in a child's life, he needs to be considered and included in research whenever possible. Children need positive

adults in their life. Ideally, they will have two caring and involved parents, but this is not always the case. By asking children and mothers and fathers who is important in the life of this child, we may be able to gain a clearer picture of the potential resources which should inform sampling strategies.

One of the next steps stemming from this research is work on construct development to further define and develop the constructs in this study. Further testing of the model with a larger sample may reveal that more constructs should be included to refine the theory to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon. Constructs must be evaluated for how they will be operationalized and measured in order to test the theory from this research study. A scale can be developed based on the five categories of this study. For instance, questions focusing on father's relationship with the mothers of his children will ask about such areas as communication and IPV; factor analysis can be used to determine if the questions hold together to get at the dimensions of the factors. Later, research methods and data analysis focusing on path analysis could be used to examine the relative contribution of each construct to the model.

Another area for further study is more expanded theory testing. This exploratory study is an important first step. It provides more information regarding an understudied population. Now it is necessary to take what was learned from a limited sample and pursue applicability to more and/or other types of fathers. This can be achieved through studying more fathers involved in child maltreatment. It would also be helpful to study fathers with other challenges such as substance abuse and IPV. Another avenue is to explore these constructs with a general population of fathers who are not identified as high risk to determine similarities and differences.

Further study of temperament and goodness of fit between father and child is another important direction. This area is understudied and we have little knowledge of how child characteristics impact fathering. If research reveals that this is negatively impacting the parenting relationship, education and services can be developed to help fathers manage this. This type of thorough examination takes time, particularly when there are multiple children involved. The opportunity to learn more about bidirectional influence and the ways fathers respond to different children's temperaments and its possible mediating effect on child maltreatment are all important. A mixed methods study using a reliable and valid instrument such as the Children's Behavior Questionnaire (Putnam & Rothbart, 2006) to assess child temperament would provide useful information in conjunction with a qualitative examination of father's perceptions regarding temperament and goodness-of-fit.

With quality of fathering by nonresident fathers being more important than quantity for child wellbeing (Adamsons & Johnson, 2013), future studies need to examine the types of activities fathers engage in with their children and how these activities may differentially impact children. I would suggest a mixed method study involving fathers and mothers that examines child outcomes in the academic, social and emotional domains. Gathering father, mother, and child report of activities would provide richer information and minimize some of the reporting bias that exists in many previous studies.

Conclusion

In some cases, fathers are ignored and overlooked. Research often involves only one parent, which is generally the mother as she is often the most accessible. In order to keep children safe and enhance their wellbeing, we cannot do the things the easy or quick way. We

must work harder to engage both parents. We need to look for strengths and areas of challenge in both parents. In this way, we can use the pre-existing strengths and enhance areas that are not as strong.

In many ways, for the fathers in this study their situations are precarious. Many are in flux, and just barely staying afloat. With a little extra social support or parenting education, they may be able to do better. But, if they lose a job, or have conflict with child's mother, they may slip below the surface and cease as a resource for their children. The need for assistance and support is clear. In some cases, this is achieved through a support network of family and friends. Other fathers are longing for additional fathers who they can participate in activities with and discuss the ups and downs of fathering. The fathers in this study demonstrate that the love and desire to be a good father is present. In order to achieve acceptable (or even better) fathering and provide their children with nurturing, support, and a healthy father, the need for effective interventions must be met. This study, with its results that suggest important dimensions needed to reach at least an acceptable level of fathering, is a step in that direction. By delineating some of the strengths and challenges of fathers related to maltreatment it provides clues for needed future knowledge building including intervention research. From this beginning many levels of preventive and remedial interventions can be developed to help fathers be more competent and children more safe and healthy.

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Appendix A

Demographic Form

1. Your age: _____ **For privacy purposes, please select a false name:** _____

2. Your Age when your oldest child was born: _____

3. Number of Children: _____

4. Ages of Children: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____

5. Relationship to Children: Biological Father _____ Step Father _____ Adoptive Father _____
Social Father (uncle, grandfather, non-related caretaker) _____

6. Marital Status: ☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced
☐ Separated ☐ Widowed ☐ Unmarried Partners

7. Do you live with your child's mother? Yes _____ No _____ Other _____

8. Highest Level of Education Completed:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 st -4th grade | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than high school education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5 th -6th grade | <input type="checkbox"/> High school grad/GED |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7 th -8th grade | <input type="checkbox"/> Some college, no degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9 th grade | <input type="checkbox"/> Associate's degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10 th grade | <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11 th grade | <input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree or higher |

9. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano
- ☐ Yes, Puerto Rican
- ☐ Yes, Cuban
- ☐ Yes, another Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin? _____ (write in)

10. What is your Race? Mark one or more boxes:

- ☐ Black/African American
 - ☐ White/Caucasian
 - ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
 - ☐ Asian Indian ☐ Japanese ☐ Native Hawaiian
 - ☐ Chinese ☐ Korean ☐ Guamanian or Chamorro
 - ☐ Filipino ☐ Vietnamese ☐ Samoan
 - ☐ Other Asian (write in below) ☐ Other Pacific Islander (write in below)
- _____

- 11. Employment Status:**
- ☐ Employed Part time ☐ Unemployed
 - ☐ Employed Full time ☐ Retired
 - ☐ Other ☐ Not employed due to disability

12. What is your household income: \$ _____ per month **OR** \$ _____ per year

13. Are you currently:

- ☐ Waiting to start a parenting group
- ☐ In a parenting group
- ☐ Finished with your parenting group

Appendix B

Interview Protocol: Fathering and Maltreatment

Date of Interview:

Place:

Interviewee Pseudonym:

Interviewee Number:

Questions:

1. Tell me about your experiences as a father?
 - a. Age at fatherhood?
 - b. Relationship with mother?
 - c. Time/Experience with baby?
 - d. Living arrangements?
 - e. Relationship to child?
 - f. Parenting partners?
2. What do you see as your strengths as a father?
 - a. Most helpful?
 - b. Previous relationships?
 - c. Helpful experiences?

- d. Contributions to child's care?
 - e. Helpful education/training?
 - f. Changes since becoming a father?
3. What is the most challenging part of being a father?
- a. Mental health issues?
 - b. Substance abuse?
 - c. Age?
 - d. Incarceration?
 - e. Stress?
 - f. Wish you knew?
 - g. Wish did differently?
 - h. Problem behaviors?
 - i. Needs?
4. What other factors have influenced your parenting?
- a. Income/Finances?
 - b. Family structure?
 - c. Family size?
 - d. Relationship with your father?
 - e. Relationship with child's mother?
 - f. Violence in your relationship with child's mother?

5. How would you describe yourself as a father?
 - a. Main roles?
 - b. Activities with child?
 - c. Quantity?
 - d. Quality?
 - e. Risk-taking behaviors?
6. Do you think that your child is particularly easy or difficult to parent?
 - a. Similarities to you?
 - b. Differences to you?
 - c. Impact on relationship?
 - d. Activities in common?
 - e. Describe your child?
 - f. Illness or disability?
 - g. School progress?
 - h. Child's relationships with others?
7. When thinking about abusing or neglecting a child, what do you think contributes the most to this happening in general?
 - a. For you?
8. What do you wish workers/other people knew about you?

Appendix C

Informed Consent

RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

TITLE: Fathering and Maltreatment: A Grounded Theory Study

VCU IRB NO.: HM15403

If any information contained in this consent form is not clear, please ask the study staff to explain any information that you do not fully understand. You may take home an unsigned copy of this consent form to think about or discuss with family or friends before making your decision.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to learn more about fathers and maltreatment. We would like to know more about fathers' strengths, challenges, attitudes and behaviors.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are attending or have attended parenting classes at SCAN and are a father or father figure to one or more children.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND YOUR [YOUR CHILD'S] INVOLVEMENT

If you decide to be in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form after you have had all your questions answered and understand what your participation involves.

In this study 20-30 men will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview session. As a participant, you will be asked to complete a demographic form and then take part in a 60-90 minute interview. You will be asked questions about your experiences in fathering, your relationship with your child's mother, how you were fathered, what has helped you as a father, and what has been challenging for you. With your permission, the session will be tape recorded so that your ideas are accurately captured but no names will be recorded on the tape.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Sometimes talking about these subjects causes people to become upset or emotional. Several questions will ask you about things that have happened in your family that may have been unpleasant. You do not have to talk about any subjects you do not want to talk about, and you may end the interview at any time. If you become upset, the study staff will give you names of agencies to contact so you can get help in dealing with these issues.

BENEFITS TO YOU AND OTHERS

You may not get any direct benefit from this study, but, the information we learn from fathers in this study may help us design better programs for fathers so we can better help them and their families.

COSTS

There are no costs for participating in this study other than the time you will spend in the interview and filling out questionnaires. We will provide a bus pass, if desired, when you participate in the interview.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

You will receive a \$25.00 gift certificate for participating in the interview. The \$25.00 gift certificate will be given at the end of the interview.

ALTERNATIVES

The alternative to participating in this study is not participating.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Potentially identifiable information about you will consist of your interview notes and recordings. Data is being collected only for research purposes. Your data will be identified by an ID number and pseudonym, not your actual name, and stored in a locked research area. All personal identifying information will be kept in password protected files and these files will be deleted once the study ends. Expanded field notes, which are only identified by ID number and pseudonym, will be kept indefinitely. Access to all data will be limited to study personnel.

We will not tell anyone the answers you give us; however, information from the study and the consent form signed by you may be looked at or copied for research or legal purposes by Virginia Commonwealth University.

What we find from this study may be presented at meetings or published in papers, but your name will not ever be used in these presentations or papers.

We will not tell anyone the answers you give us. But, if you tell us that you might hurt yourself or someone else the law says that we have to let people in authority know so they can protect you or others. If we suspect that you have abused or neglected a child, other than past incidents which were reported, we are obligated by law to inform Child Protective Services.

With your permission, the interview will be audio taped, but no actual names will be recorded, only the pseudonym you have chosen. The tapes and the notes will be stored in a locked cabinet. After the study ends, the tapes will be destroyed.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You do not have to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, you may stop at any time without any penalty. You may also choose not to answer particular questions that are asked in the study.

Your participation in this study may be stopped at any time by the study staff without your consent. The reasons might include:

- the study staff thinks it necessary for your health or safety;
- you have not followed study instructions;
- administrative reasons require your withdrawal.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions, complaints, or concerns about your participation in this research, contact:

Dr. Mary Katherine O'Connor

Professor

Virginia Commonwealth University

School of Social Work

(804) 828-0688

mkoconno@vcu.edu

Jenny Shadik

Doctoral Candidate

Virginia Commonwealth University

School of Social Work

shadikja@vcu.edu

804-240-4822

The researcher/study staff named above is the best person(s) to call for questions about your participation in this study.

If you have any general questions about your rights as a participant in this or any other research, you may contact:

Office of Research

Virginia Commonwealth University

800 East Leigh Street, Suite 3000

P.O. Box 980568

Richmond, VA 23298

Telephone: (804) 827-2157

Contact this number for general questions, concerns or complaints about research. You may also call this number if you cannot reach the research team or if you wish to talk with someone else. General information about participation in research studies can also be found at <http://www.research.vcu.edu/irb/volunteers.htm>.

CONSENT

I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions that I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study. I will receive a copy of the consent form once I have agreed to participate.

Participant Name (Printed)

Participant Signature

Date

I authorize the recording of my interview: _____ (signature)

Name of Person Conducting Informed Consent

Date

Discussion / Witness (Printed)

Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent

Date

Discussion / Witness

Principal Investigator Signature (if different from above)

Date ⁴

Appendix D

List of Referrals

Richmond Behavioral Health Authority

107 S. Fifth St.
Richmond VA 23219
804-819-4100 Crisis Number
804-819-4000

Henrico CSB

10299 Woodman Rd.
Glen Allen, VA 23060
804-727-8484 Crisis Number
804-727-8515 Intake

Hanover CSB

12300 Washington Highway
Ashland, VA 23005
804-365-4200 Crisis Number
365-4222

Chesterfield CSB

6801 Lucy Corr Blvd.
Chesterfield VA 23832
804-748-6356 Crisis Number
(804) 768-7220

Vita

Jennifer Ann Shadik was born on February 24, 1971, in Potomac, Maryland, and is an American citizen. She graduated from East Kentwood High School, Kentwood Michigan in 1989. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan in 1993. She received a Master of Social Work degree from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan in 1995. She has practiced as a social worker for many years, including work in family preservation, as a parent group facilitator, and clinical supervisor.